THE CHURCH AS HOLY IN AUGUSTINE AND THE DONATISTS

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INTRODUCTION

The theological term "Holy Church," so well established in Christian usage,[1] is plainly ambiguous. As early as the third and fourth centuries this ambiguity already troubled the peace of the Church. In what sense is the Church holy for the Donatists and in what sense is it holy for Augustine?

The primary purpose of this study will be to examine and compare the definitions of the holiness of the Church in the thought of Augustine and the Donatists. In a preliminary section, however, we shall have to give a short account of the Donatist problem in general and to examine briefly the various conceptions of holiness which formed the background of the Donatist controversy.

The Donatist controversy was a crucial landmark in the history of the Church, not only because it presented a threat to the existence of the Catholic Church in

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[1]Holiness is ascribed to the Church in the New Testament in such passages as Ephesians 5:27, I. Peter 2:9, I. Cor. 3:17 and Rev. 21:2. Usage of the term among the early Fathers is also found, e.g., Ignatius, To the Trallians, inscription; Hermas, Shepherd, Vision I. 1. 6; 3. 4; Hippolytus, Apostolic Tradition, II. 21:11b, 17:20:1; Tertullian, Against Marcion, V. 4.

North Africa, but also because it compelled the Church to examine carefully and define its understanding of itself as a holy institution. While there are specialized studies treating the Donatist schism as a nationalistic phenomenon[2] as well as general studies treating the subject from an ecclesiastical perspective,[3] there is none which has adequately treated the concept of the Church's holiness in light of the basic theological presuppositions underlying the Augustinian and Donatist positions on the issue. In examining, therefore, both the Donatist and Augustinian conceptions of "holy" Church we shall hope to be able to clarify the crucial theological questions behind the schism.

The Donatist schism originated in the period immediately following the persecution of the Church under the Emperor Diocletian (A. D. 303-305). It was known that certain clergy of the Catholic Church has surrendered, or

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[2]E.g. Wilhelm Thümmel, Zur Beurtheilung des Donatismus (Halle: Inaugural-Dissertation, 1893), W. H. C. Frend, The Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), see especially pp. 22-75. C. J. Spell, II. "The Disappearance of Christianity from North Africa in the Wake of the Rise of Islam," Church History, v. xxix, no. 4 (December 1960), 379-97. Ronald A. Knox, Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion (New York: Oxford University Press, a Galaxy Book, 1961), Chapter 4.

[3]E.g. G. G. Willis, St. Augustine and the Donatist Controversy (London: S. P. C. K., 1950). Many aspects of Frend's work also fall into this category. Op. cit., Chapters 11-20.

had pretended to surrender the scriptures to the Roman authorities in order to escape persecution, and others were thought to have done so. In 311, when Caecilianus was consecrated bishop of Carthage in Africa, some of his fellow bishops claimed that he was in fact not a duly consecrated bishop, for they suspected Felix of Aptunga, one of the bishops who had a part in his consecration, had been a traditor.[4] Their position was that all who were guilty of such a crime had lost their ability to confer sacramental grace.[5] Therefore, in opposition to the Catholic bishop of Carthage, the schismatic prelates consecrated a bishop of their own choosing in 312, Majorinus, by name, who later was succeeded by the able bishop Donatus from whom the schismatic movement derived its name.

In spite of persecution and imperial edict, the Donatists continued to flourish in North Africa until the Islamic invasions of the seventh century. The persistent

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[4]The name for one who handed over the scriptures.

[5]There were, as might be suspected, personal differences and other subtle factors which also played a major part in the schism. These nontheological factors are briefly treated note 1, p. 20, Chapter II. Suffice it to say here that while Caecilianus was still Archdeacon of Carthage, he antagonized Lucilla, a wealthy lady of the city, by rebuking her for her practice of kissing the relics of a martyr before partaking of the Eucharist. When the split with the Church came, it was Majorinus, Lucilla's chaplain, who was chosen bishop in opposition to Caecilianus. See Frend, op. cit., pp. 17-24.

claim of the Donatists to be the only true Church compelled the mainstream of Western Christianity to rethink its doctrine of the Church. As we shall observe, Augustine of Hippo (354-430), who was much concerned with the Donatists in his native Africa, must receive the final credit for crystallizing the thought of his predecessors with respect both to the Donatist problem and to the Catholic understanding of the holiness of the Church. In so doing, Augustine formulated the ecclesiology that was destined to dominate Western medieval thought.

Unfortunately for this study, our sources of information regarding the tenets of the Donatists come not from the Donatists themselves, but from their opponents. We are therefore limited to a certain degree in our ability adequately to grasp the true Donatist position, since we can automatically suspect that, as reported by their adversaries, the Donatist's position suffered some measure of distortion. However, the very fact that the Donatists neither challenged the accuracy of the reports of Optatus of Milevis, an arch foe of the schism, nor attacked the manner in which Augustine presented their tenets would seem to indicate that we have in their works a reasonably reliable foundation for our study.[6]

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[6]Frend, op. cit., pp. xv-xvi, "The Donatists were sharp enough to take Augustine up on any inaccuracies of quotation, but his facts are not challenged."

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CHAPTER I

VARIOUS CONCEPTIONS OF HOLINESS

Since it is evident from the testimony of history that holiness may be understood in a variety of ways, it will be our purpose in this chapter to consider at least those biblical and patristic conceptions of sanctity which formed the background of the Donatist controversy. First, we shall examine briefly the Old and New Testament usages of holiness, since Catholics and schismatics alike claimed biblical support for their respective positions. Secondly, we shall consider the concept of holiness as expressed by Tertullian, Cyprian, and Optatus, for these men of the African church, more than any other, provided the basic materials from which Augustine and the Donatists forged their polemical weapons.

Within the Hebraic tradition, which formed the matrix for the Christian Church, holiness[1] is that

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[1]The Hebrew word qodesh which is usually translated as "holy" in English is probably derived from the primitive Semitic root q-d-sh meaning "separation." On this see W. T. Smith and W. J. Harrelson, article "Holiness" in Dictionary of the Bible, J. Hastings, ed. (rev. ed.; New York: Charles Scribner's, 1963), pp. 387-88. Also see Norman H. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (London: Epworth Press, 1960), pp. 24-32.

attribute which is particularly characteristic of deity.[2] According to Old Testament thought, the Lord of Israel is holy in that he is exalted in majesty above his creation[3] and is separate from human infirmity and sin.[4] If there is any attribute par excellence which distinguishes Jehovah from mankind it is "holiness." Thus Hosea 11:9 suggests:

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[2]For the pagan Semitic usage of "holy" with respect to the gods see W. F. Albright, The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra: An Historical Survey (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, The Cloister Library, 1962), p. 17; Millar Burrows, What Mean These Stones?: The Significance of Archaeology for the Study of the Bible (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), p. 229; W. Robertson Smith, Lectures on the Religion of the Semites (1st series, rev. ed.; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1901), p. 141, n. 1. G. E. Wright, Biblical Archaeology (abridged ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), p. 13.

[3]Cf. Isaiah 6:1, 3; Psalm 22:3. On this see Brown, Driver and Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, based on the lexicon of William Gesenius as translated by Edward Robinson (Oxford University Press, reprinted with corrections, 1953, 1957), article qodesh, l. a., p. 872. It is this majestic-holiness that is stressed by Rudolf Otto in his Idea of the Holy, where he tries to prove holiness was originally devoid of all ethical content. Also stressing the transcendental aspect of holiness, W. R. Smith says of the term, ". . . it is not so much a thing that characterized the gods and divine things in themselves, as the most general notion that governs their relation with humanity. . . ." Op. cit., p. 142.

[4]Cf. Joshua 42:19, I. Sam. 6:20, Ezekiel 39:7. Otto recognizes that the ethical aspect of holiness is undeniably present in the Old Testament when he says: "Mere awe, mere need of shelter from the 'tremendum' has been elevated to the feeling that man in his 'profaneness' is not worthy to stand in the presence of the holy one, and that his own entire personal unworthiness might defile even holiness itself." R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy; an inquiry into the nonrational factor in the idea of the divine and its relation to the rational, trans. John W. Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, a Galaxy Book, 1958), p. 54.

". . . I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst. . . ."[5]

At the same time that the attribute of holiness was primarily reserved for deity, it was, in a secondary sense, also ascribed to persons or things dedicated to God, and thus separated from common usage.[6] Both the Old[7] and the New[8] Testaments describe as holy that which is set apart for the service of the Lord. Of particular interest to us in this respect is the manner in which the Apostle Paul reminds the faithful that they have been "called to be saints" or "holy ones" (hagioi)[9] and that they are saints "in Christ Jesus."[10] In other words, it is not by virtue of their own merit, but solely because they have been "called" to be God's possession through Christ that the

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[5]Smith and Harrelson, op. cit., p. 387. "This passage . . . contains the best summary of the meaning of the holiness of God to be found in the Old Testament. On the one hand, it lays stress upon the 'otherness' of God: His majesty and incomparability with any created thing. On the other hand, it affirms the nearness of God to man. . . ."

[6]Ibid., p. 388; cf. Snaith, op. cit., pp. 43 ff.; Brown, Driver and Briggs, 2. a. b., loc. cit.

[7]E.g. Ex. 19:6, 28:2, Lev. 16:16, 22:7, Deut. 7:6, I Chron. 22:19, Neh. 8:9.

[8]E.g. Matt. 23:17, 19, 24:15, 27:53, I Cor. 3:17, II Pet. 1:18.

[9]Rom. 1:7; cf. I Cor. 1:24.

[10]Phil. 1:1.

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[6]Ibid., p. 388; cf. Snaith, op. cit., pp. 43 ff.; Brown, Driver and Briggs, 2. a. b., loc. cit.

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[8]E.g. Matt. 23:17, 19, 24:15, 27:53, I Cor. 3:17, II Pet. 1:18.

[9]Rom. 1:7; cf. I Cor. 1:24.

[10]Phil. 1:1.

Christians are "holy" or "saints."[11] What is true of individual Christians is also true of the corporate body of the "called"--the Church (ekklēsia).[12] Thus the writer of Ephesians says:

> . . . Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her that he might consecrate her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that the church might be presented before him in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. (Ephesians 5:25-27.)

The Church is holy, not because of any intrinsic virtue, but because of her relationship to Jesus Christ,[13] which, in this passage, is compared to a husband-wife relationship--

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[11]Cf. Otto Procksch, article Hagios in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Gerhard Kittel, ed., Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans. (Grand Rapids and London: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), v. i, p. 107. "For it is not by nature but by divine calling that Christians are hagioi; they owe their membership of the holy cultic community to the call of divine grace in Christ. . . ."

[12]William Robinson says of ekklēsia: "It had been the normal word used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew words edah and qahal, which meant Israel as a corporate society. Undoubtedly the word as applied to the followers of Christ already means that here is the "new Israel" of God, whom he has 'called out' to be his . . . people." The Biblical Doctrine of the Church (rev. ed.; Saint Louis: The Bethany Press, 1960), p. 60. Cf. Karl Ludwig Schmidt, article "Church," trans. J. R. Coates in Bible Key Words: from Gehard Kittel's Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951), v. i, pp. 51 ff. Also Robert N. Flew, Jesus and His Church (8th ed.; London: Epworth Press, 1950), p. 142.

[13]Cf. Procksch, op. cit., p. 107, "Basically there is no distinction . . . between the hagioi of the mother community and those of the missionary Church, for in each case the holiness derives from Christ."

an analogy employed by the Hebrew prophets to depict Jehovah's relationship to Israel.[14] As the wife of Jehovah, Israel was God's possession and therefore holy.[15] The early Church, which believed itself to be the true Israel, naturally conceived of its holiness in similar terms. Throughout our study we shall refer to these biblical aspects of holiness as "theocentric," thereby signifying the concept that holiness is primarily characteristic of God and secondarily characteristic of persons or things that enjoy a special relationship to God, this relationship having been effected by divine, not human, initiative.

Another conception of holiness is that which we shall refer to as "anthropocentric." By this term we mean the view that the "holy" relationship of God with men and things must be sustained, to some degree, by human

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[14]E.g. Hosea 2:14-20, Ezekiel 16:32. Cf. L. S. Thornton, The Common Life in the Body of Christ (3rd ed.; London: Dacre Press, 1950), p. 223, "Now the prophets taught that Israel is the wife of Jehovah. . . . Her children are his children. . . . This marriage covenant is not represented as being based upon a community of nature between God and man in virtue of creation. . . . Its whole significance depends upon the contrast between a holy God and the sinful people whom he has chosen. He made them his by an act of undeserved favor." Cf. Robinson, op. cit., p. 72, ". . . in Ephesians 5:22-33 . . . Paul bases himself on the nuptial theology of Hosea, Jeremiah, and second Isaiah." See also J. Robert Nelson, The Realm of Redemption: Studies in the Doctrine of the Nature of the Church in Contemporary Theology (London: The Epworth Press, 1951), p. 81.

[15]Cf. Jeremiah 2:2, 3:8, Isaiah 62:4-5.

conduct.[16] Unless carried to an extreme, the anthropocentric view does not exclude the theocentric view of holiness as we have defined it. Various Christian thinkers, as we shall see, made a place for both aspects of holiness in their thought. On the one hand, they acknowledged that holiness is a gift from God, and, on the other hand, they stressed the need to sustain this gift by right conduct. Although many advocates of this conception of holiness could be cited, we shall confine ourselves at this point to two men who made a deep impression upon the thought of the North African church--Tertullian and Cyprian of Carthage. To be sure, these men were not typical Catholic thinkers of their day. Indeed, it is the novel characteristics of their thought that sets them apart as major contributors to African rigorism and, therefore, makes them special subjects of our attention.

Personal holiness played a major part in the thought of Tertullian, particularly after his break with the Catholic Church and his alignment with the Montanists.[17]

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[16]An example from the Old Testament of this conception of holiness is to be found in Leviticus 11:44, ". . . consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy. . . ."
The conception appears also in I Peter 1:15, ". . . as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct. . . ."

[17]Montanism originated in Asia Minor about 156 A.D. Montanus, from whom the sect derived its name, claimed that he was the recipient of a new revelation from the Holy Spirit. Opposed to secular tendencies within the Church

Possession of the Holy Spirit and personal holiness were synonymous for Tertullian,[18] and in this sense he reflected the theocentric or biblical concept that man must derive holiness from God alone. However, the emphasis which Tertullian placed upon personal conduct as a means of guaranteeing a holy relationship with the Spirit was typical of rigorist thought in the early Church. He claimed that those who marry "avert" the Holy Spirit,[19] and that the Christian virgin who exercises exemplary conduct is "more holy" than she who does not.[20] And in the true spirit of a rigorist he held that "the flesh is taught

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and desirous of renewing the prophetic office, Montanus and his followers claimed to have a spiritual insight that was missing among those outside their sect. Thus the Montanists predicted the time and place where the heavenly Jerusalem was to be established on earth. Rigid asceticism, celibacy, fasting, and abstinence from meat was required of the faithful to prepare them for the approaching heavenly reign. The appeal that this rigorous type of Christianity had for Tertullian is obvious in his later writings.

[18]Tertullian says that "the Spirit is without any external influence recognized as 'holy'; nor does He wait to be admonished to sanctity, which is His proper nature." On Monogamy, III, trans. S. Thelwall, in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. iv, "Tertullian, Part fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts first and second (authorized ed.; New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1890). He makes holiness correlative with possession of the Spirit when he says, "For continence will be a mean whereby you will traffic in a mighty substance of sanctity: by parsimony of the flesh you will gain the spirit." On Exhortation to Chastity, X, ibid., Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds.

[19]On Exhortation to Chastity, X, ibid.

[20]On the Veiling of Virgins, XV, trans. S. Thelwall, loc. cit.

sanctity" by discipline in virtuous living.[21] The influence of Montanism upon Tertullian's thought is revealed especially in his hostile attitude toward the Catholic Church of his day. In contrast to the organized Church of the bishops, which he disdainfully referred to as the "Psychic"[22] Church, Tertullian championed the cause of the "Spiritual" Church which, he claimed, is the "Spirit Himself."[23] Those who belong to the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the "Psychic" Church, the Montanist Tertullian maintained, have no power to forgive sins.[24] Only "spiritual" men, he insisted, hold the authority to grant remission of sins.[25]

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[21] On Monogamy, III, loc. cit.

[22] On Modesty, I; VI; XXI, trans. S. Thelwall, loc. cit., cf. On Monogamy, I. The "Psychics" are those who do not receive the Holy Spirit.

[23] On Modesty, XXI. Cf. Sydney H. Mellone, Leaders of Early Christian Thought (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1955), p. 180, "At times, he even identified the Church with the Spirit. . . ." Cf. Adolph Harnack, History of Dogma, v. ii, trans. Neil Buchanan (New York: Dover, 1961), p. 79, "Tertullian's conception of the Church was essentially that of Irenaeus; but with the former the idea that she is the outward manifestation of the Spirit, and therefore a communion of those who are spiritual at all times continued to operate more powerfully than with the latter."

[24] On Modesty, XXI, "For, in accordance with the person of Peter, it is to spiritual men that this power will correspondently appertain. . . ." Thelwall, trans., loc. cit.

[25] Ibid., "And accordingly 'the Church,' it is true, will forgive sins, but (it will be) the Church of the Spirit, by means of spiritual men; not the Church which consists of a number of bishops."

Thus, according to Tertullian, the Church must have "spiritual" or "holy" clergymen if her members are to receive the sanctifying benefits of their ministrations.[26] Since holiness and virtuous conduct were so intimately connected in Tertullian's thought, he was convinced that unless a priest has so lived as to merit personal sanctity, his ministrations lack salutary value. By identifying the members of the Church as spiritual men. Tertullian made the holiness of the Church correlative and coextensive with the lives of her members.[27] This vision of the Church was to

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[26]Tertullian quoted with approval, Prisca, an alleged prophetess, who reportedly said, "The holy minister knows how to minister sanctity." (Exhortation to Chastity, X.)

Cf. C. H. Turner, article "Apostolic Succession" in Essays on the Early History of the Church and Ministry, H. B. Swete, ed. (London: Macmillan, 1918), p. 185, "The doubt whether the good gifts of God can be mediated to His people by the hands of evil men vexed the minds of Christian thinkers from a very early period. Was a right life, it was asked, any less necessary than a right faith as a qualification for the stewardship of the mysteries of God?"

[27]Cf. Johannes Quasten, Patrology (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1953), v. ii, p. 331, "The more that Tertullian leaned to Montanism, the more he came to regard the body of believers as a purely and exclusively spiritual group. Cf. Erich Altendorf, Einheit und Heiligkeit der Kirche: Untersuchungen zur entwicklung des Altchristlichen Kirchenbegriffs Im Abendland von Tertullian bis zu den Antidonatistischen Schriften Augustins, in Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte, Emanuel Hirsch and Hans Lietzmann, ed. (Berlin and Leipzig: Walter De Gruyter & Co., 1932), v. 20, p. 173, "Für Tertullian stand das Ideal der Kirche als der heiligen Gemeinde durchaus im Vordergrund."

The extremely "spiritual" conception that Tertullian had of the Church is seen in his statement that ". . .

receive an extreme and distorted expression among the Donatists.

We next turn our attention to a great admirer of Tertullian--Cyprian of Carthage.[28] Cyprian was also convinced that it is mandatory for a priest to lead a worthy life in order to be able to perform his priestly functions effectively.[29] The unworthy priest, he held, cannot consecrate the Eucharist,[30] and he is a threat to the purity of the Church.[31] In this manner, Cyprian, like Tertullian,

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wherever there are three, that is, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, there is the Church, which is a body of three." On Baptism, VI, trans. S. Thelwall, op. cit., v. iii.

[28]Quasten, op. cit., p. 340, ". . . as a theologian Cyprian is entirely dependent on Tertullian. . . ." Jerome reports that "Cyprian was accustomed never to pass a day without reading Tertullian and he frequently said to his secretary, Hand me the master, meaning by this, Tertullian." De vir. ill. 53, cited by Quasten, loc. cit.

[29]Thus on the appointment of priests he says, ". . . we ought in the ordinations of priests to choose none but unstained and upright ministers, who, holily and worthily offering sacrifices to God, may be heard in the prayers which they make for the safety of the Lord's people, since it is written, 'God heareth not a sinner. . . .' On which account it is fitting, that . . . there should be chosen for God's priesthood whom it is manifest God will hear." Epistle 67. 2, trans. Ernest Wallis, The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. v, Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, eds. (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1890).

Cf. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, A History of Christian Thought, Vol. ii (New York and London: Charles Scribner's, 1953), p. 38, ". . . Cyprian . . . insisted that unworthy clergymen, even if they had not been detected in their wickedness . . . were incompetent to perform clerical functions."

[30]Epistle 63. 4., op. cit.

[31]Epistle 67. 3, op. cit.

paved the way for the Donatist schism by making the efficacy of the sacraments contingent upon the personal integrity of the priests who administer them. Cyprian's exhortation to the faithful to separate themselves from sinful clergymen[32] was to become a battle cry for the Donatists in their campaign to rid the Church of the "corruption of sin" and restore her to her "pristine purity."

For Cyprian, heroic deeds as well as virtuous lives were the hallmark of sanctity. Indeed, his glorification of martyrdom as a means of earning merit for salvation also afforded a powerful weapon for use by the Donatist polemicists. According to Cyprian there is nothing more glorious than to die for the faith and thereby win eternal life.[33] It is the martyr who enters heaven as a victorious soldier of Christ and occupies a special place of honor and merit in God's presence.[34] Those who have not been baptized with water are assured that martyrdom is equally efficacious for salvation. In the words of Cyprian, ". . . they certainly are not deprived of the sacrament of baptism who are

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Epistle 25. 2-3, op. cit.

[34] Treatise XI. 13, op. cit., cf. The Lapsed, 17, "We do not call in question the power which the merits of the martyrs . . . have with the Judge . . ." trans. Maurice Bevenot, St. Cyprian: The Lapsed, The Unity of the Catholic Church, in Ancient Christian Writers, Johannes Quasten and Joseph C. Plumpe, eds., vol. xxv (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press; London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957).

baptized with the most glorious and greatest baptism of blood."[35] Although the Donatists could not adopt all of Cyprian's teachings,[36] they found that, with some distortion, the revered bishop could be appealed to in justification of their demand for a "pure" clergy and their glorification of martyrdom.[37] If Cyprian's "anthropocentric" view of holiness provided arguments for the schismatics, his "theocentric" strain of thought, as we shall see, was to prove equally useful in the hands of their Catholic opponents.

In contrast to that strain of thought in early Christendom which identified holiness primarily in terms of

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[35]Epistle 72. 22, trans. Ernest Wallis, op. cit.

[36]Cyprian's loyalty to Catholicism and his concept of the Church as a body containing both true and false Christians (corpus permixtum) was diametrically opposed to the central thesis of Donatism. Cyprian's concept of the Church is discussed further in this chapter.

[37]Cf. Frend, op. cit., p. 131, ". . . the Donatists saw in Cyprian not merely the bishop and martyr but the supreme authority whose teaching provided a complete justification for their breach with Caecilian."

The manner in which the Donatists appealed to the authority of Cyprian on various matters is reflected in Augustine, On Baptism against the Donatists, II. 1. 2, trans. J. R. King, in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. iv, first series. Philip Schaff, ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956).

Aside from the theological factors, Cyprian represented the Church of Africa to the Donatists as opposed to the Catholic Church which represented the interests of Rome. In his own day, Cyprian challenged the right of Pope Stephen of Rome to exercise authority over his fellow bishops. Therefore Cyprian became the symbol of African nationalism as opposed to Roman imperialism.

personal conduct, there was another strain which conceived of holiness as a gift from God to the Church--a gift so enduring and independent of human merit that its reality could not be abrogated, even by the perfidy of man. The advocates of this position reflected the biblical or "theo-centric" concepts we have considered inasmuch as they envisioned holiness as being guaranteed by divine action through the Spirit, rather than through human endeavor. In other words, holiness in this sense is the fruit of union with God or divine grace, in contrast to the holiness of man's good deeds.[38] For example, Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, refers to the Holy Spirit as a "gift" which God has given to His Church for the salvation and sanctification of her children.[39] Indeed, it was because he believed that the recipient of this holy gift, that he claimed she is the

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[38]This distinction is made by Stanislaus J. Grabowski, The Church: An Introduction to the Theology of St. Augustine (Saint Louis and London: B. Herder Book Co., 1957), p. 452.

[39]Against Heresies, III. 24. 1. The idea of the Holy Spirit as a "gift" from God is frequently implied in the New Testament. In Luke 11:13 Jesus asks, "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts . . . , how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?" Cf. also John 3:34; Acts 2:18, 38; 8:20; 10: 45; 11:17. Cf. J. R. Nelson, op. cit., p. 45; "There is adequate New Testament precedent for such usage. . . . The idea of the 'gift of the Spirit' is that He comes from outside the natural order of creation in which man lives, breaking into this order to confront man and be received by man. The Bible refers to the giving of the Spirit in much the same way as the free giving of divine grace. . . ." Cf. also Thornton, op. cit., pp. 66-95.

"entrance to life"[40] in contrast to the heretical sects.

The position propounded by Irenaeus received its logical conclusion in the thought of Cyprian. If the Holy Spirit is given only to the Catholic Church, Cyprian reasoned, then where the Spirit is absent there can be no sacraments.[41] Hence baptism is not only nonexistent outside the Church, but when heretics imitate the sacrament of the Church, their ritual is performed with "polluted water" that only increases the sin of those who participate in the false rite.[42] Such reasoning, although it may seem harsh, was a natural conclusion to draw from the premise that all who are outside of the Church are also outside the sphere of the Spirit's redemptive activity.[43] For Cyprian it was

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[40] Against Heresies, III. 4. 1. Cf. Harnack, op. cit., II, 78. ". . . Irenaeus, frequently asserts that the Spirit and the Church are inseparable . . . that outside the Catholic Church there is no salvation, etc.; in fact these doctrines form the very essence of his teaching." See also J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines (2nd ed.; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), p. 192.

[41] Concerning baptism, Cyprian said, "For if the Church is not with heretics, therefore, because it is one, and cannot be divided; and if thus the Holy Spirit is not there, because He is one, and cannot be among profane persons . . . certainly, also baptism which consists in the same unity, cannot be among heretics, because it can neither be separated from the Church nor from the Holy Spirit." (Epistle 73. 4, trans., Ernest Wallis, op. cit.) Cf. Turner, op. cit., p. 200; "Cyprian's position with regard to baptism is clear. The sacraments are the sacraments of the Church, and therefore can only be administered within the Church."

[42] Epistle 73. 21.

[43] Epistle 73. 5.

axiomatic to say, "There is no salvation outside the Church."[44] The only hope for heretics who had received a false baptism outside Catholic unity was to receive the "lawful baptism of the Church"[45] and thereby enter the life of the Spirit.

The clear logic[46] of Cyprian's teaching on baptism

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[44]Epistle 73. 21; cf. Unity of the Catholic Church, 6; "You cannot have God for your Father if you have not the Church for your mother." Trans. Bevenot, op. cit.

[45]Epistle 73. 12; ". . . all who are converted from any heresy whatever to the Church must be baptized by the only and lawful baptism of the Church, with the exception of those who had previously been baptized in the Church, and so had passed over to the heretics." Ernest Wallis, trans., vol. v of Ante-Nicene Fathers. Here Cyprian reflects the influence of Tertullian. In On Baptism, XV, Tertullian reasoned that heretical baptism is worthless, since it lacks the regenerative power of the Spirit, thereby implying that reconciled heretics must receive the true baptism of the Church. Cf. Robert Rainy, The Ancient Catholic Church, From the Acession of Trajan to the Fourth General Council (New York: Scribner's, 1902), p. 409; "The energy of the feeling that a holy vitality, maintained by the Spirit in the Church, and pervading it, is essential to the discharge of its functions, appears very early in the position sustained so resolutely in Africa, and championed . . . by Cyprian, that those who have been baptized in heresy must be baptized again, because the former baptism was null, through the defect of the minister."

[46]A position which is "logical" does not always prove to be "orthodox" or acceptable. Pope Stephen (254-57) represented the more liberal attitude of Rome by claiming that even heretical baptism, if administered correctly, was "valid" though not "efficacious" unto salvation. Therefore, repentant heretics were to be admitted to the Church without being subjected to a second baptism, the theory being that the Spirit was operative within the Church, thereby making the baptism of reconciled heretics efficacious for salvation.

Although Cyprian disagreed with Stephen on this issue, he never severed his fellowship with Rome--a fact

was to prove a powerful weapon in the hands of the Donatists in their struggle with the Catholic Church. However, not every feature of Cyprian's teaching was to lend itself so easily to the cause of the schismatics. Unlike Tertullian, Cyprian did not make so close a connection between the holiness of the Church and the lives of each of her members. In fact, he claimed that the scriptural passages on the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:24-30) and the vessels to honor and dishonor (I Tim. 2:20) depicted the mixture of true and false Christians within the Church which will exist until the judgment day.[47] Cyprian's main concern was for peace and unity within the Catholic communion; thus, he depicts the Church as a mother whose children are characterized by likemindedness, not unusual piety.[48] The ultimate distinction between the just and the unjust, at least before the day of judgment, is determined by one's obedience or disobedience to the Catholic

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with which Augustine delighted to confront the Donatists. The African custom of rebaptizing reconciled heretics was officially condemned in 314 at a council held at Arles in Gaul. Thus the liberal policy of Rome was eventually victorious even in Africa, except among those who withdrew from the Catholic Church.

[47]Epistle 50. 3.

[48]The Unity of the Catholic Church, 23, ". . . I urge and press it upon you, that, if possible, not one of the brethren should perish, but that our Mother should have the happiness of clasping to her bosom all our people in one like-minded body." Bevenot, trans., loc. cit.

Church.[49] For this reason, no sin was so heinous to Cyprian as that of heresy or schism, for both the heretic and schismatic are cut off from the unity of the Church and the life of the Spirit.[50] Having placed ecclesiastical unity above moral perfection, Cyprian found it necessary to ground the holiness of the Church elsewhere than in the lives of her members. Hence he reflects that biblical motif which conceives of holiness as being rooted in a husband-wife type of relationship between Christ and his people. As the "spouse of Christ"[51] the Church, he maintained, cannot be defiled.[52] The Church, then, was for Cyprian the indispensable condition for salvation. Although perfection may be lacking among her members, she is still holy by virtue of her union with Christ and her possession of the Spirit who sanctifies and redeems men through the sacraments.[53] Thus, while Cyprian's "anthropocentric" view of holiness demanded a clergy that demonstrated holiness in terms of personal conduct, his

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[49] Ibid., 10.

[50] Ibid., 23.

[51] Epistle 54. 1.

[52] The Unity of the Catholic Church, 6. Cf. S. L. Greenslade, Schism in the Early Church (London: SCM Press, 1953), p. 170, ". . . Cyprian . . . added that the Church is holy not because all its members have achieved eminent sanctity or because the unholy have been expelled, but precisely because it is the Church, the bride of Christ."

[53] Harnack, op. cit., vol. ii, p. 114, "In accordance with this theory the holiness of the Church can merely

"theocentric" approach allowed the sanctity of the Church to remain inviolate in spite of evildoers in her midst.

It remained for the Donatist controversy to serve as the final catalyst in crystallizing Catholic thought on the objective sanctity of the sacraments and the holy nature of the Church. Prior to Augustine, Optatus, bishop of Milevis in North Africa, played a major part by clarifying Catholic thought in this area in his polemical work against the Donatists, De Schismate Donastistarum.[54]

Following the biblical concept that the possessions of God are holy, Optatus regarded the sacraments as permanently holy, since they belong to God, not man. Furthermore, since God has entrusted His Church with these "holy" sacraments, it is from them that she derives her sanctity, regardless of the number of evil men in her midst.[55] God,

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consist in her possession of the means of salvation: the Church is a holy institution in virtue of the gifts with which she is endowed."

[54]H. Daniel-Rops, The Church of the Apostles and Martyrs (London & New York: Dutton, 1960), p. 461, "The great doctrinal arguments set in motion by Donatus . . . had provided Christianity with an opportunity to define numerous points of dogma. This had been the work chiefly of St. Optatus of Milevis, the champion of catholicity and unity, the theologian of the Sacraments, the precursor of St. Augustine and the distinguished forerunner of the thesis of the great doctor of Hippo."

Cf. McGiffert, op. cit., vol. ii, p. 109; Kelly, op. cit., pp. 411-12.

[55]Optatus, De Schismate Donatistarum, Caroli Ziwsa, ed. (Vidobonae: F. Tempsky, 1893, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum), II. 1; "ergo ecclesia una est, cuius sanctitas de sacramentis colligitur, non de personarum superbia ponderatur."

not man, acts through the sacraments. Therefore the Donatists had erred, Optatus argued, for it is to be remembered that it is the immutable Trinity that bestows grace in baptism, not the priest who is subject to human failings.[56]

In reply to the Donatist argument that the New Testament refers to the Church as a holy body, purged of all evil, Optatus asserted that the Scripture actually refers to the Church as she will be after the judgment day, and that the Donatists have erred in trying to anticipate the future state of the Church.[57] For the present time the faithful must expect to find evil men in their midst. But in no sense does this detract from the holiness of the Church, for that is guaranteed by the gifts which God has given to her. Upon this theocentric premise Optatus rested his case. It remained for Augustine to build upon the foundation.

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[56] Ibid., V. 7, "nam et ipsis sic mandatum est, ut opus esset illorum sanctificatio trinitas; nec in nomine suo tingerent, sed in nomine patri et filii et spiritus sancti: ergo nomen est, quod sanctificat, non opus."

[57] Ibid., II. 20, "nam et a Christo saluatore nostro perfecta sanctitas non est data sed promissa; denique sic ait: sancti eritis, quia ego sanctus sum. Solus est ergo perfectus et sanctus, denique non dixiti sancti estis, sed dixit: sancti eritis."

CHAPTER II

THE DONATIST CONCEPTION OF HOLY CHURCH

The primary purpose of this chapter is to present in brief compass the basic tenets of Donatism in order to make clear the crucial issues which formed the heart of the controversy between Augustine and the African schismatics. The implications of the Donatist position for our problem will be treated later in the work.

Upon the basis of the extant evidence it appears that Donatism rested upon two basic presuppositions: (1) The Church is holy, because her members individually are de facto holy in that they have visibly proven their sanctity by their personal conduct, and (2) the holiness of the Church can be maintained only by separation from the unholy. Let us now consider these two presuppositions in more detail.

The Church and de facto holy members. While various factors[1] may be ascribed to the genesis of the

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[1]W. H. C. Frend acknowledges his debt to Wilhelm Thümmel (see p. xii of Frend's introduction) for his analysis of Donatism as an aspect of African nationalism in his Zur Beurtheilung des Donatismus, Inaugural-Dissertation, Halle, 1893. However, Frend writes with

Donatist Church, from a theological aspect the claim to exclusive holiness formed the crux of the schism.[2] It was this claim to a special sanctity as well as a disdain for the fellowship of other Christians throughout the world that brought the rebuke of Optatus upon the Donatists.[3]

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archaeological data at his disposal that was unknown to the German scholar in the nineteenth century.

The High Plains of southern Numidia (central Algeria) were, Frend observes, the stronghold of Donatism for three centuries, in contrast to Carthage and Proconsular Africa which remained generally loyal to the Catholic Church. The reason for this religious division can be explained, Frend believes, largely in terms of social, economic, geographical, and climatic conditions in North Africa. The Proconsular Province was the center of urban communities and Roman civilization. Outside of the towns there were large estates tended by slaves and enriched by the grain trade with Rome. However, the High Plains of Numidia remained out of reach with Roman civilization. A sparse rainfall and scarce supply of fresh water imposed a low standard of living upon the Numidians. In contrast to the affluent life found in sections of Proconsular Africa, life in Numidia, Frend observes, was primitive and equalitarian. The Berbers who inhabited the High Plains spoke Libyan, not Latin; they were steeped in ancient customs and beliefs, cherished a love for liberty, and resented the outlook of their Roman conquerors. From the matrix of such social unrest, the Donatist schism was born. Thus Frend presents the Donatist Church as an expression of the desire of the African people to assert their independence of Rome by rebelling against the Church that was largely supported by the Emperor.

[2]Cf. A. C. McGiffert, A History of Christian Thought (New York and London: Charles Scribner's, 1953), vol. ii, p. 110 and G. G. Willis, St. Augustine and the Donatist Controversy (London: S. P. C. K., 1950), p. 146.

[3]Optatus, Bishop of Mileve, De Schismate Donatistarum. Preface and critical notes by Carolus Ziwsa. Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vindobonae: F. Tempsky; 1893), II. 1, 14, III. 10.

To be sure, in severing their fellowship with the churches in communion with Rome, the Donatists were not rejecting the concept of a "Catholic" Church. On the contrary, they claimed to be the only true Catholic Church. However, in so doing, they redefined catholicity to mean "observance of all divine precepts" and possession of true sacraments, not universality.[4] Thus it was imperative for the Donatists that they prove their "holiness," for upon this issue rested their claim to be the Catholic Church. To produce such "proof" it was not only necessary for the Donatists to fulfill what they regarded to be the supreme test of holiness, but it was equally important that they convince others of the unholiness of their Catholic adversaries. Thus Petilian, a Donatist bishop, is quoted by Augustine as saying to his Catholic opponents, "You should not call yourselves holy . . . no one has holiness who has not led a life of innocence."[5] Augustine makes it clear that the schismatics[6] were convinced that they were truly

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[4]So Augustine in Letter 93. 7. 23. Cf. Reinhold Seeberg, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte: Die Dogmenbildung in der Alten Kirche, vol. ii (Graz: Akademische Druck u. Verlagsanstalt, 4. Auflage, 1953), p. 443.

[5]Against the Letters of Petilian, II. 48. 3., J. R. King, trans. in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. iv, Philip Schaff, ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956).

[6]Augustine made a distinction between schism and heresy that is still widely accepted in the West. His classic definition of schism is set forth in his work

innocent.[7]

Having committed themselves to this line of reasoning, it is not surprising that the Donatists should declare that they alone were righteous,[8] the only true Christians,[9] and the pious ones who walk the narrow way while all else travel the road to perdition.[10] Even the ruins of the Donatist churches bear evidence of their claim to holiness. At Henchir-el-Guesseria in Africa a stone is inscribed H(A)EC PORTA DOMI(N)I IUSTI INTRABUNT.[11] A small chapel is described in an inscription as <u>praeclara et decora domus</u>

<u>Against Faustus</u>, XX. 3, wherein he maintains that "schism" applies to those who hold to the same doctrine and worship as do the Catholics, but who choose to meet separately from the Catholic communion. Thus Augustine defines the schismatic as the orthodox Christian who has withdrawn from the fellowship of his brethren; while the heretic is one who has departed from orthodox teaching. But the thought of Augustine was not always uniform in its expression. At times Augustine conceded that there was a sense in which the Donatists were still in communion with the Catholics (<u>On Baptism against the Donatists</u>, I. 1). On another occasion, Augustine accused the Donatists of heresy by virtue of their cleavage from the Church (<u>Against the Letters of Petilian</u>, II. 96. 219). It would appear that the heat of the controversy caused Augustine to equate schism with heresy, but we may say that in his more dispassionate moments, he maintained a distinction between the two.

[7]<u>Against the Letters of Petilian</u>, II. 39. 92.

[8]Cf. Augustine, <u>Enarration</u> 18 on Psalm 139; homily I on I John, 8.

[9]Cf. Augustine, <u>Enarration</u> 11 on Psalm 96.

[10]Augustine, <u>Against the Letters of Petilian</u>, II. 45. 105.

[11]G. G. Willis, <u>St. Augustine and the Donatist Controversy</u> (London: S. P. C. K., 1950), p. 28.

Dei: another domus Dei perfecta.[12] Such inscriptions are in complete harmony with what we know of the Donatist demand for visible proof of holiness from each of their members, as well as their conviction that the Church "without spot or wrinkle" existed in their communion.[13]

But how does one ascertain true holiness in the life of a Christian? To the Donatists the supreme test was simple and obvious. If a man had been a traditor during the persecution of Diocletian, he was unholy and cut off from the life of the Church, but if he displayed rectitude during that time of testing by refusing to surrender the scriptures to the authorities, he was holy and undoubtedly within the Church.[14] On the other hand, they claimed that

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Optatus, op. cit., II. 20, VII. 2; Augustine, Correction of the Donatists, IX. 39. Cf. John Burnaby, trans. and ed. Augustine: Later Works, vol. 8 of The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), p. 255.

[14] Cf. F. W. Dillistone, "The Anti-Donatist Writings," pp. 188-89 in A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine, Roy W. Battenhouse, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955). Willis, op. cit., p. 117; Frend, op. cit., pp. 22 ff. This is not to say that the Donatists did not regard other crimes as excluding a man from holiness. Petilian reportedly said, "A saint cannot be a murderer. Against the Letters of Petilian, II. 20. 44. The same bishop holds that adultery "pollutes" holiness (ibid., II. 57. 129). Coveteousness (ibid., II. 59. 133) and bearing false witness (II. 58. 131) are also referred to by the Donatist in a condemning manner. The Conatists, like the Catholics, recognized numerous sins as being contrary to holiness. But the events which resulted in the schism led the Donatists to emphasize the traditore issue above everything else as a test for sanctity.

a traditor was as spiritually dead as Judas, the betrayer of Christ.[15] Consequently the ministrations of a priest guilty of surrendering the scriptures were worthless.[16] Unless the priest who administered the sacrament of baptism was pure in his own conscience, he could not cleanse the conscience of those he baptized.[17] Thus the logic of the Donatists was simple and blunt. If a man does not have holiness within himself, with respect to the traditore issue, it is evident that he cannot impart to others the sanctity he lacks.[18] To be sure, the Donatists, like their Catholic opponents, Optatus and Augustine, acknowledged that ultimately the sacraments derive their efficacy and, hence,

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[15]Augustine, Against the Letters of Petilian, II. 8. 17.

[16]Augustine, Against the Letters of Petilian, II. 8. 17. In the third century, as we have seen, Tertullian and Cyprian vigorously championed the idea that the efficacy of the sacraments is dependent upon the personal holiness of their administrators. This idea was perpetuated with fanatical zeal by the Donatists who narrowed the test for holiness to courage in not surrendering the scriptures during Diocletian's persecution.

[17]Ibid., II. 3. 6, "For what we look to," Petilian said, "is the conscience of the giver to cleanse that of the recipient." King, trans., loc. cit.

[18]According to Augustine, the Donatist Parmenian said, "The strictness of the divine law will not allow it to come to pass, that one who is dead should raise men to life, one who is wounded, should heal them, one who is blinded, should enlighten them, one who is naked, should clothe them, one who is defiled should make them clean." Against the Letter of Parmenian, cited by R. A. Knox, Enthusiasm (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 66. Cf. Optatus, op. cit., V. 6, ". . . One cannot give what he does not have."

holiness, from God alone.[19] Nevertheless, this "theocentric" element in Donatist thought was apparently obscured to a great degree by their "anthropocentric" insistance that communication of that efficacy is contingent upon the personal merit of the priest administering the sacraments.

Among the Donatists, then, we find a strong manifestation of that conception of holiness which envisions a rigid nexus between sanctity and personal conduct. There is no attempt to conceal the claim that is obviously being made: man's spiritual welfare is a state that is guaranteed by human exertion. Here we encounter moralism,[20] an element to be found in movements ranging from the Meletian[21]

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[19]According to Augustine, Petilian said with respect to the "power" of the sacraments that "there is no power but of God,"' none in any man of power; as the Lord Jesus Christ answered Pontius Pilate. . . . And again, in the words of John, 'A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.'" Against the Letters of Petilian, II. 31. 70, King, trans.

[20]By "moralism" we mean that view of Christianity which regards "holiness" and favor with God as the reward granted those who obey the divine will, or perform a meritorious deed (such as living a life of celibacy, etc.). Since the emphasis is upon human effort rather than upon divine grace within this frame of reference, we shall use "moralism" virtually as a synonym for "anthropocentric."

[21]The Meletian schism, like Donatism, came out of the Diocletian persecution. Meletius of Lykopolis, a south Egyptian bishop, contested the right of Peter, bishop of Alexandria, to hold the episcopal chair because he fled from Alexandria during the persecution. Furthermore, Meletius was evidently much less ready to offer penance to those who denied their faith during the persecution than was his Catholic rival. Like the Donatists, the Meletians claimed to be champions of pure discipline and a church of

schism to the Pelagian heresy.[22] Personal sanctity is primarily a reward for righteous conduct in a time of persecution. The right to be considered among the "holy" is a privilege that belongs only to those who are unafraid to live a heroic Christian life and are careful to shun the company of the cowardly. The law of "valor" was the standard by which the Donatists lived, and they showed no tolerance for those who could not meet its requirements. Indeed, they persistently maintained that the priests of the Catholic Church were the successors of those who had been traditores during Diocletian's persecution;[23] therefore the

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martyrs. Characteristically, the moralists show little sympathy for the lapsed, since they tend to assume that a Christian can lead a "holy life" if he chooses to do so.

For further discussion on the Meletian schism see S. L. Greenslade, Schism in the Early Church (New York: Harper, 1953), pp. 53-54, 194.

[22]Moralism received a vigorous expression among the Pelagians. Pelagius, a monk of Britain or Ireland, radically disagreed with Augustine's doctrine of man. According to Pelagius, Adam harmed no one but himself by his sin. Each man is morally neutral at birth and has the full capacity to choose either good or evil. Ignorance and the evil example of Adam leads men astray, but it is possible for anyone to lead a life of moral perfection simply by knowing the good and obeying it.

For further discussion on Pelagianism see Benjamin B. Warfield, Studies in Tertullian and Augustine (New York: Oxford University Press, 1930), pp. 289-412. Also Paul Lehmann "The Anti-Pelagian Writings" in Battenhouse, op. cit., pp. 203-234.

[23]Incredible as it may seem, the Donatists condemned the Catholics in toto--clergy and laity alike, whether or not they had actually been guilty of surrendering the scriptures. The theory was that all who remained in the Catholic communion were automatically corrupted by those who were traditores, the sin being transmitted like a

Catholic clergy were unholy and ipso facto could not be true channels of sacramental grace.[24] On the other hand, since the Donatists claimed to be the spiritual descendents of those who refused to surrender the scriptures, they claimed that their priests were holy and qualified to grant remission of sins through baptism.[25] Thus the entire Donatist case rested upon the presupposition that the Church is holy, because she possesses a priesthood that is uncontaminated by contact with traditores, thereby guaranteeing the sanctity of each of her members and excluding all unholy men from her midst.[26]

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deadly plague. The rigidity of the Donatist position might lead one to presume that the Catholics condoned traditores, but such was not the case. At the Council of Arles (314) it was resolved in Canons XIII and XIV that bishops who could be proved by public records to have been traditores were to be deposed, although their ordinations were still to be recognized as valid. The same Council also declared that Felis of Aptunga and Caecilianus were not traditores. Cf. Willis, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

[24]Cf. Augustine, Letter 51. 2; On Baptism Against the Donatists, VII. 2. 3. See also Turner, op. cit., p. 149; Seeberg, op. cit., p. 443; Willis, op. cit., p. 117.

[25]According to Augustine the Donatists said, "We take away sin from men, we who are holy; for if he be not holy who baptizeth, how taketh he away the sin of another, when he is a man himself full of sin?" Trac. IV on Gospel of John, 11, John Gibb and James Innes, trans. in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. vii, first series. Philip Schaff, ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956). Cf. Augustine, Letter 51. 4; 76. 4; trac. I on I John, 8; trac. V. 15 and XI. 12 on Gospel of John.

[26]Cf. Eugène Portalié, A Guide to the Thought of Saint Augustine. Introduction by Vernon J. Bourke. Trans. Ralph J. Bastian (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1960), p. 234;

The holiness of the Church as maintained by separation from the unholy. As we have seen, nothing was more abhorrent to the Donatist mind than the sin of surrendering the scriptures during Diocletian's persecution. Not only was the traditor corrupted by his own sin, but so heinous was the nature of his crime that those who came into sacramental contact with the malefactor were also stained with his guilt.[27] Hence, according to the Donatists, all Catholics were traditores because of their fellowship with the successors of Caecilian, the bishop who, it was alleged, had been consecrated by a traditor.[28]

If personal sanctity can be lost merely though contact with sinful traditores, then it is unthinkable that the holy and the unholy should be allowed to coexist within

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Adolph Harnack, History of Dogma. Neil Buchanan, trans. (New York: Dover Publications, 1961), vol. v, p. 142; Burnaby, op. cit., p. 255; Knox, op. cit., p. 66.

[27]Augustine reports that the Donatist Petilian said: "He is dead who has not deserved to be born again with a true baptism; he is likewise dead who, having been born again with a true baptism, has become involved with a traditor. Both are wanting in the life of baptism;--both he who never had it at all, and he who had it and has lost it." Against the Letters of Petilian, II. 7. 14., trans. J. R. King, op. cit.

[28]Cf. Optatus II. 14. 18; Augustine, Against the Letters of Petilian, II. 39. 94; III. 57. 69; On Baptism Against the Donatists, VII. 2. 3; Letter 51. 2. Cf. Rainy, op. cit., p. 406; Seeberg, op. cit., p. 442. In Letter 44. 4. 7, Augustine says that Fortunatus, the Donatist bishop of Cirta, denied that Ambrose, bishop of Milan, was either righteous or a Christian because of his communion with the Catholic Church.

the Church, for the Church would soon cease to be holy due to the infectious power of evil. Therefore, the Donatists believed that the only way to maintain the Church's existence was by withdrawing from that communion which, in fact, had ceased to be the Church through her loss of holiness.[29] Indeed they claimed that in separating themselves from the "apostate" Catholic communion they were heeding the divine command which says, "Depart ye, go ye out from thence, and touch no unclean thing" (Isaiah 52:11).[30] Holiness can exist only in isolation. There can be no fellowship of light with darkness,[31] nor mixing of the holy "wheat" with the unholy "tares."[32] In no case is it to be thought that the saints are simply to withdraw from the wicked by an inner decision to refrain from evil. The act of separation must be accomplished overtly, so that the Church will be

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[29]J. F. Bethune-Baker, An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine to the Time of the Council of Chalcedon (London: Methuen, 1962), p. 369, ". . . so according to their conception, a Church which tolerated unworthy members within its ranks was itself polluted and ceased to be a true Christian Church at all."

[30]Augustine, Sermon 38. 23, R. G. MacMullen, trans. in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. vi, Philip Schaff, ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956).

[31]Augustine, Against the Letters of Petilian, II. 39. 92; 40. 95. Petilian reportedly said: "In the first Psalm David separated the blessed from the impious, not indeed making them into parties, but excluding all the impious from holiness." Ibid., II. 46. 107, J. R. King, trans., op. cit.

[32]Augustine, ibid., II. 26. 60; 79. 174.

purged of all traditores.[33]

Such aloofness was nurtured by the Donatist contention that all the righteous "wheat" had perished throughout the entire world, except within the Church of the "holy" in Africa.[34] Rebuking the Donatist bishop of Carthage for his claim that the true Church exists only in Africa, Optatus remarked: "You have said, brother Parmenianus, that it [holy Church] is with you alone . . . among you in a small region, but among us in another part of Africa will it not be?"[35] But the Donatists were relatively unaffected by the polemics of their Catholic opponents. They were persistent in claiming that the true worship of God was abandoned in all nations, Africa excepted.[36] From their point of view,

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[33]Cf. Optatus, op. cit., IV. 3; VI. 7; Augustine, Sermon 46. 7. 15; 8. 31; Against the Letters of Petilian, II. 83. 184.

[34]Cf. Augustine, Against the Letters of Petilian, III. 2. 3; 6. 7; Letter 44. 2, 3; 49. 3; 52. 2; 76. 2; 87. 6.

[35]Optatus, op. cit., II. 1-3, cited by Joseph C. Ayer, A Source Book for Ancient Church History: From the Apostolic Age to the Close of the Conciliar Period (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1952), p. 446. Cf. Augustine, Enarration 13 on Psalm 86, "For such persons blaspheme who say that the Church has perished from the whole world, and is only in Africa." A Cleveland Coxe, trans. in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. viii.

[36]So zealous were the Donatists in defending this position that they even devised an ingenious allegorical interpretation of the Song of Solomon in order to prove that they alone were the true Church. Augustine says: ". . . They are in the habit of taking this testimony in their mouths, and saying, 'Africa is under the midday sun:

they had not separated from the Church at all. Rather all of Christendom had fallen into apostasy, leaving only the faithful remnant of their persuasion to perpetuate the doctrine of the Apostles and martyrs. Therefore, no matter how vehemently the Donatists might be denounced as "schismatics," they were convinced that such accusations were hollow, since they were uttered by clergymen who could not be regarded as God's spokesmen.

Closely associated with their claim to exclusive sanctity was the Donatist exaltation of martyrdom. As "victims of oppression" they believed themselves to be truly separated from the world and undoubtedly superior to their "persecutors."[37] In fact, the Donatists never tired of accusing the Catholics of being the source of their "unjustified" torment, for in so doing they hoped to

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the Church then,' they say, 'asking the Lord where He feedeth, where He lieth down; He answereth, 'Under the midday sun'; as if the voice of her who put the question were, 'Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou liest down; 'and the voice of Him who answereth were, 'Under the midday sun'; that is, in Africa." Sermon 88. 9, R. G. MacMullen, trans., loc. cit. For further references to this Donatist claim, which was evidently made frequently, see Augustine Letter 87. 5; 44. 4. 7; Tractate 2 on I John, 3, Homily 13 on Gospel of John, 3.

[37]Burnaby, op. cit., p. 254, "For them, the perfect Christian must always be the martyr. Apostasy, the cowardly refusal to die for the faith, must always be unforgivable sin. . . ." Cf. Knox, op. cit., p. 254, "What fixed the Donatist ethos, and distinguished it from that of the Catholics was in the last resort nothing else than an exaggerated veneration for martyrdom."

vindicate their claim to be the only true Christians while publicly discrediting their opponents.[38] Furthermore they cherished the popular belief of the day, advocated by Cyprian,[39] among others, which depicted martyrdom as a certain means of securing eternal life.[40]

The Donatist glorification of martyrdom received its most extreme expression in the habits of those bands of maurauders known as "Circumcellions."[41] While there is some question as to what degree they were directly involved with the Donatist Church,[42] the Circumcellions merit our attention, not only because they sided with the Donatist cause,[43] but also because they shared, in exaggerated form,

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[38]Cf. Augustine, Homily 6. 23; 11. 13 on Gospel of John; Letter 44. II. 4.

[39]Cf. Cyprian, The Lapsed, 17; Letter 72. 22.

[40]Augustine, Against the Letters of Petilian, II. 8. 17, ". . . if indeed that can be said to be death to men which makes them immortal because they died for the Lord." Petilian also reportedly said, "For when you kill our bodies then do we celebrate a second baptism. . . ." Ibid. II. 23. 51, J. R. King, trans., loc. cit.

[41]They derived their name from the fact that they lived "around the shrines" of the martyrs (circum cellas) whence they obtained their food. Cf. Frend, op. cit., p. 173. "The Circumcellions merely represented Donatist doctrine in its extreme form." Ibid., p. 174.

[42]C. P. Groves, The Planting of Christianity in Africa, vol. i (London: Lutterworth Press, 1948), p. 64, "There were indeed Donatists who disowned them, and some who invoked the civil power against them. . . . They represented at bottom the social and racial revolt of a repressed peasantry." Cf. also Ayer, op. cit., p. 322.

[43]Rainy, op. cit., p. 407, n. 1, "The Donatists . . . were the popular African Church, and the

the Donatist passion for the sanctity attached to martyrdom. "They live as robbers," Augustine remarked, "they die as Circumcellions, they are honored as martyrs."[44] So fanatical were the Circumcellions in their zeal to die as "martyrs" that they apparently even stopped strangers on the road, compelling these strangers to kill them or to be killed themselves.[45] When such means of "martyrdom" were not available, Augustine tells us that they were known to resort to suicide by casting themselves over precipices, drowning, or fire.[46] Likewise the Donatists, Augustine implies, were not beyond similar practices of self-destruction.[47]

Behind the peculiarities and extremes of the Donatist movement lay a deep-rooted desire to preserve the

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Circumcellions were in sympathy with them as such." Some Donatists boasted of the Circumcellions as their agonistici ("Agon was a technical term for a martyr's struggle." Frend, op. cit., p. 174, n. 5) and paid those who were executed the honors of sanctity. See Optatus, op. cit., III. 4. Cf. Knox, op. cit., p. 64.

[44]Augustine, Letter 88. 8, trans. J. G. Cunningham in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. i. Philip Schaff, ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956).

[45]Augustine, Letter 85. 4. 15.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Augustine, Against the Letters of Petilian, II. 20. 46; cf. Willis, op. cit., p. 14.

identity of the Church in marked contrast to the world.[48] The Donatist Church was an attempt to perpetuate a concept of the Church as the fellowship of the perfect in a world where the concept was widely held that the Church is an institution for training in perfection. In departing from the mainstream of Christian thought, the Donatists relinquished all claims to universality and defended their claim to be the true Catholic Church by virtue of their assertion to be the sole possessors of efficacious sacraments and holy members. By so doing they bore the marks that were to become characteristic of those sects[49] that were to oppose the established Church in succeeding generations.

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[48]Cf. Augustine, Enarration 18 on Psalm 139; Against the Letters of Petilian, II. 13. 30; 15. 35. Frend, op. cit., p. 315, "It was the nature of the Church as a society and its relationship to the world rather than its distinctive beliefs that formed the heart of the controversy."

[49]Seeberg, op. cit., p. 445, "A new type of religious fellowship confronts us first clearly in the Donatists. One may call it the type of the sect."

Troeltsch observes that "the sects . . . are comparatively small groups; they aspire after personal inward perfection, and they aim at a direct fellowship between the members of each group. From the very beginning therefore, they are forced to organize themselves into small groups and to renounce the idea of dominating the world." Ernst Troeltsch, The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches, vol. i. Olive Wyon, trans. (New York: Macmillan, 1931), p. 33.

CHAPTER III

AUGUSTINE'S CONCEPTION OF HOLY CHURCH

The manner in which the controversy developed between Augustine and the Donatists was determined to a great extent by a concept of the Church that enjoyed wide acceptance in the fifth century among Catholics and schismatics alike. Both Christians within the Catholic communion as well as those outside her fold agreed that salvation was limited to the "Church."[1] Augustine was in no sense unique when he declared that membership within the Church was an indispensable prerequisite for redemption;[2] indeed, his assertions on this matter were strongly reminiscent of

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[1]Augustine held that not even the schismatics questioned the generally accepted belief that salvation is confined to the Church. Cf. On Baptism against the Donatists, IV. 17. 25.

[2]Benjamin B. Warfield, Calvin and Augustine (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1956), p. 313, "The idea of the Church was . . . so little the creation of Augustine that he took it over from his predecessors. . . ." Cf. Eugène Portalié, A Guide to the Thought of Saint Augustine. Trans. Ralph J. Bastian. Introduction by Vernon J. Bourke (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1960), p. 230; Adolf Harnack, History of Dogma. Neil Buchanan, trans. (New York: Dover Publications, 1961), V, 41-42; H. Daniel-Rops, The Church of the Apostles and Martyrs (London, New York: Dutton: 1960), p. 461.

Cyprian.[3] "Outside this body," Augustine affirmed, "the Holy Spirit giveth life to no one. . . . Therefore they have not the Holy Spirit who are outside the Church. . . ."[4] The Donatists, as Augustine acknowledged,[5] practiced essentially the same liturgy and confessed the same doctrines as did the Catholics. Nevertheless, he was adamant in his declaration that only those in communion with the Catholic Church possess the Holy Spirit that works unto salvation.[6]

The salutary claims which Augustine made for the

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[3]John Burnaby, Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1960), p. 255, "He shared with his opponents the rigid dogma of Cyprian that there is no salvation outside the Church." The degree to which Augustine was influenced by Cyprian is indicated in his statement, ". . . You are safe who have God for your Father and His Church for your mother." Against the Letters of Petilian, III. 9. 10, J. R. King, trans., The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. iv (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956). Cf. Cyprian, On the Unity of the Catholic Church, 6.

[4]The Correction of the Donatists, xi. 50, J. R. King, trans., in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. iv, first series. Philip Schaff, ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956), loc. cit.

[5]"The Donatist Church can have everything without the Catholic Church; it can have dignities . . . sacraments . . . songs of alleuia . . . faith and the preaching of faith. But salvation--that can be found nowhere outside the Catholic Church." Sermo ad Caesareensis ecclesia plebem, 6, cited by Portalié, op. cit., p. 232; cf. Cyprian, Ep. 73:21.

[6]". . . They who have separated from the Church have not this Spirit. . . ." Sermon xxi. 30. R. G. MacMullen, trans. The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. vi, first series. Philip Schaff, ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956).

Catholic communion were made with equal vigor by the Donatists in behalf of their "Church." At this point, then, we can say that there was at least a formal similarity between the Catholic bishop and the African rigorists. The real point of disagreement arose from a divergent interpretation of the holiness of the Church. Augustine agreed with the Donatists that the true Church must be holy, but he most heartily disagreed with the manner in which they defined her holiness. To begin with, Augustine rejected the Donatist teaching that the holiness of the Church can be safeguarded only if she follows a policy of exclusion. Both Augustine and the Donatists were deeply influenced by Cyprian's famous saying: "There is no salvation outside the Church,"[7] but their interpretation of the dictum differed radically. The latter took the words of Cyprian in an exclusive sense; that is, they were primarily concerned with the salvation of those whom they believed were already within the Church, i.e., the "perfect" and the holy. Preservation of personal sanctity by withdrawal from the company of <u>traditores</u> was evidently more crucial to the rigorists than the task of bringing sinners within the fold. The lost were outside the Church and the saved were within, and the Donatists were eager to maintain such a status quo. On the other hand, Augustine interpreted Cyprian's maxim in

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[7]Cyprian, Epistle 73:21.

an inclusive or positive sense. If there is no salvation outside the Church, he reasoned, then it is imperative that the Church encompass all nations so that redemption and sanctification might be made available for a lost world. Contrary to the zeal of the rigorists to expel the unworthy from the Church, Augustine pled that the "wheat" might patiently bear with the "tares" for the sake of Christian unity.[8] Indeed, he even went so far as to defend the use of force to compel those who had departed from Christian unity to return to Mother Church.[9]

Whether the Church resorted to the normal means of preaching and teaching or to the distasteful method of coercion, her goal was always the same--to win the world

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[8]Sermon 38:21-22. A similar plea was expressed by Cyprian: "I indeed desire . . . that if it be possible, none of the brethren should perish, and that our rejoicing Mother may enclose in her bosom the one body of a people at agreement." On the Unity of the Church, 23, trans. Ernest Wallis, in Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. v. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, eds. Revised and chronologically arranged, with brief prefaces and occasional notes by A. Cleveland Coxe (Authorized ed.; New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1890).

[9]Cf. Correction of the Donatists, vi. 23. Christ "compelled" Paul to become a Christian, Augustine argues; "therefore, the Church, in trying to compel the Donatists, is following the example of her Lord. . . ." Augustine admits that teaching is the desirable way to win the wayward to the Church, but should peaceful means fail, he claims that the Church is justified in appealing to the civil authorities to exert coercion upon dissenters for their ultimate spiritual welfare (ibid., ii. 11; vi: 21). Concerning this harsher aspect of the controversy, Burnaby says: ". . . it drove Augustine himself to betray his most Christian principle of toleration, and to justify the use of force by that fatal interpretation of compelle intrare . . ." op. cit., pp. 100-101.

for Christ.[10] For this reason, Augustine argued, the Donatists could not be regarded as the "true" much less "holy" Church, because they had failed to obey the missionary task with which the Church has been entrusted by her Lord.[11] Contrary to the Donatists, the missionary task of the Church is more important than the purity of her membership, especially if purity must be maintained at the expense of her universality or catholicity.[12]

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[10]Contrasting the exclusive policy that was characteristic of the rigorists with the inclusive policy that was typical of the Catholics, Bainton observes that "those who compare the church to the ark of Noah, outside of which there is no salvation, are loath to expel the moral offender . . . but eager to force in the heretic, who is surely lost if he remain without. On the other hand those who regard the church as a community of the saints naturally expel the moral offender . . . whereas the heretic is by no means to be forced in, lest an unworthy element be introduced. The one identifies the tares with the delinquent within, the other with the heretic without." Roland H. Bainton, Early and Medieval Christianity (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), pp. 95-96.

[11]Against the Letters of Petilian, II. 15. 35, "But if nothing is more true than that which Christ said, that His Church should be throughout all nations . . . there is nothing more false than that which you say, that it is in the party of Donatus." J. R. King, trans. Cf. ibid., II. 38. 91. Also see Enarrations on the Psalms, Enarration 2 on Psalm 149, trans. A. Cleveland Coxe, The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, v. viii, first series. Philip Schaff, ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956).

[12]A contemporary Catholic evaluation of Augustine is offered by Stanislaus J. Grabowski in The Church: An Introduction to the Theology of St. Augustine (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1957), p. 201, "Like St. Paul, St. Augustine is a champion of universalism. The Donatists' doctrine of the Church accorded admirably with their intense national devotion to things African. But for Augustine the Church of Christ could not be bound up with any one nation,

Augustine envisioned the Catholic Church as a redemptive institution extending throughout the entire world and "rising amid tares."[13] In so describing the Church as a corpus permixtum--a mixed body composed of faithful and unfaithful--he followed the usage of the revered Cyprian[14] who claimed that the scriptural passages on the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:24-30) and the vessels to honor and dishonor (I Tim. 2:20) depict the mixture of saints and reprobates within the Church in her present estate. With such a vision of the Church in mind, the claim of the Donatists that their fellowship consisted solely of men of proven sanctity seemed to be the height of presumption to Augustine for two essential reasons. First, if the Church has been established to serve as an institution for the salvation of mankind, it is obvious

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land or continent. He who had a universal grasp on the history of man's thought and conduct could not but realize that religion like truth must be one and destined for all mankind."

From a Protestant viewpoint, Pelikan says, "The urge to universality made the church capitalize on the opportunity. . . . It capitalized on the opportunity by its missionary program and by adjustments in the standards of its membership; thus the church could absorb the people who joined it because it was the thing to do in the fifth century." J. Pelikan, The Riddle of Roman Catholicism (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1959), p. 32.

[13]On Baptism, Against the Donatists, I. 4. 5, trans. J. R. King in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. iv.; cf. Enarration 21 on Psalm 139, A. Cleveland Cose, trans.

[14]Cyprian, Epistle 50:3. G. G. Willis, St. Augustine and the Donatist Controversy (London: S. P. C. K., 1950),

that if she should ever be reduced to a clique of the holy ones, she would no longer be the Church. Secondly, Augustine found the assumption that one could be confident of his salvation and sanctity to be at odds with his own theological presuppositions. He held that not even all who are sincere Catholics can be certain of their eternal destiny, for man's election to salvation is determined by and known to God alone.[15] Augustine conceded that even within the Catholic Church the "wheat" or elect are much fewer in number than the "tares" or non-elect.[16] But such

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"St. Cyprian's was the first exposition of these passages of Scripture as presenting the type of conditions of Church society."

[15]On Rebuke and Grace, XIII. 40, "For who of the multitude of believers can presume, so long as he is living in this mortal state, that he is in the number of the predestined?" Cf. IX. 21. Trans. Peter Holmes and Robert E. Wallis, The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. v, first series. Philip Schaff, ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956). Cf. Tractate XII on the Gospel of John, 12, "For the Lord knoweth them that are His: He knows who are persevering for the crown, and who for the flame. . . ." John Gibb and James Innes, trans., The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. vii, first series. Philip Schaff, ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956). Cf. W. J. Sparrow Simpson, St. Augustine's Episcopate: a brief introduction to his writings as a Christian (New York: Macmillan, n.d.), p. 91, "Predestination had been his theory for years. . . . But in the later stages of the Pelagian disputes he reiterated it in the most uncompromising form. Expressed concisely, his theory was that, by an eternal decree, the Almighty divided mankind into two contrasted divisions, independently of any merits, and assigned the one division to eternal life, and the other to eternal death."

[16]Sermon 38:22, "I grant that in comparison with the tares and chaff the wheat is less in quantity. . . ." St. Augustine: Sermon on the Mount, Harmony of the Gospels,

a concession did not detract from his affirmation that the elect must ultimately find their salvation within the Catholic communion.[17] Heretics and schismatics may appear to be beyond all hope of redemption due to their pernicious doctrines and obstinate pride, but even among these there are some, known only to God, who are destined for fellowship with the Church and life eternal.[18]

The approach of Augustine, then, was to let the matter of salvation and holiness rest entirely with the divine initiative. We shall refer to this Augustinian approach as "theocentric" or "Christocentric."[19] In the

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Homilies on the Gospels, R. G. MacMullen, trans. in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. vi. Cf. Sermon 40:4, Against the Letters of Petilian, II. 45. 106. Archibald Robertson, Regnum Dei: Eight lectures on the Kingdom of God in the History of Christian Thought (London: Methuen & Co., 1901), p. 198, ". . . Within . . . the inner circle of consistent and faithful Christians, not all . . . are truly vessels made for honor, i.e. elect, or destined to persevere." Cf. Grabowski, op. cit., p. 648.

[17]Enarration 2 on Psalm 149, "Those who are beside the way are not yet Christians, or not yet Catholics." Robertson, op. cit., p. 198, ". . . There are the elect outside the Church who are destined to come in and persevere . . . none of the elect die outside the Church."

[18]On Baptism Against the Donatists, IV. 3. 5, ". . . We see what they are today, what they shall be tomorrow we know not. And with God . . . they already are what they shall hereafter be." Cf. ibid., II. 14. 19; Sermon 21:21.

[19]We frequently use the term "Christocentric" as a synonym for "theocentric" in light of Augustine's high Christology. For a sampling of Augustine's beliefs concerning the deity of Christ see Tractate 68 on Gospel of John, 2-3; On the Trinity, I. 7; II. 2; IV. 19-20; Euchridion, XIII. 41-42. Also see "The Person and Work of

final analysis, it is only God or his Son who has brought the saints into existence. The holy ones exist, not because of their heroic behavior in time of persecution, nor for any other meritorious deed, but solely because they have been predestined by God to be his people. Holiness, in this context, refers primarily to one's having been set apart for God rather than to a state of human moral excellence.[20] It is this theocentric approach to the problem which was opposed to all moralistic definitions of holiness and was, therefore, distinctly opposed to Donatist thought.

The Donatists, as we have seen, were adamant in their position that the Church has already been perfected in holiness as evidenced in the lives of her members with respect to the traditore issue. In other words, the holiness of the Donatist Church was guaranteed by the men who comprised her membership and safeguarded her sanctity against "evildoers." We shall therefore refer to the Donatist position as "anthropocentric," since its understanding of holiness is firmly based upon human merit and effort. As opposed to the concept of a Church perfected in

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Christ," pp. 343-370 by Albert C. Outler in Roy W. Battenhouse, ed. A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955).

[20]Thus Augustine echoes that Biblical motif which defines a person or object as "holy" that has been set apart from common usage for the service of deity. See Chapter I, p. 3.

holiness, Augustine advocated an eschatological doctrine of holiness similar to that of Optatus.[21] Augustine maintained that the holiness of the Church would not be fully realized in this world until the day of judgment when the Lord himself would expel all reprobates from her midst.[22] Until that day of cleansing, the Church is in a state of "becoming"; that is, the saints within her walls are maturing in their holiness through the influence of the proclaimed word and participation in the sacraments.[23] The Christian life is a pilgrimage, a time of discipline in which the faithful are trained in holy living as their desires are

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[21]Optatus, Bishop of Mileve, De Schismate Donatistarum. Preface and critical notes by Carolus Ziwsa. Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vindobonae: F. Tempsky, 1893), II. 20, "nam et a Christo saluatore nostro perfecta sanctitas non est data sed promissa; denique sic ait: sancti eritis, qua ego sanctus sum. solus est ergo perfectus et sanctus, denique non dixiti sancti estis, sed dixit: sancti eritis."

[22]Against the Letters of Petilian, II. 46. 108; Letter 53, iii. 6, The City of God, XVIII. 48, XIX. 28.

[23]"To this end are celebrated the Holy mysteries; to this end is preached the word of God . . . to the amendment of carnal lusts, to the renouncing of the world, not in word only, but in change of life: to this end is directed the whole aim of the Divine and Holy Scriptures, that the entire man may be purged of what hinders us from the sight of God." Sermon 38:5, R. G. MacMullen, trans. "Perfect righteousness is not, save only in the angels . . . but in us it has begun to be, of faith, by the Spirit." Tractate IV on I John, 3, H. Browne, trans. in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. vii, first series. Philip Schaff, ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956). Cf. Reinhold Seeberg, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, vol. II (Graz: Akadomische Druck u. Verlagsanstalt, 1953), p. 471, "He understands that the holiness of the Church is

severed from the love of the world.[24] Many will grow weary and fail during their earthly sojourn, but the same God who calls men to be saints also bears with their failings so that they might finally be brought to perfection.[25] Herein the discrepancy between the theocentricity of Augustine and the anthropocentricity of the Donatists is again evident. By restricting their definition of holiness to one's relationship to a past event, i.e. the persecution under Diocletian, the Donatists conceived of sanctification as an accomplished fact, not as a continuing process. And since holiness was held to be absolutely contingent upon one overt deed par excellence, the Donatists assumed that

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something mystical and dynamic . . . which through law and sacrament can become real."

[24]Homily IV on I John, 6. Here we find what might be called an "anthropocentric" strain in Augustine's thought in that he stresses human effort in order to lead a holy life. However, this anthropocentric strain is tempered by his conception of various kinds of grace. Thus there is "prevenient" grace in which God "anticipates us that we may be called. . . . He anticipates us that we may lead godly lives. . . ." (On Nature and Grace, 35). Then there is "cooperating" grace by which God assists and cooperates with man's will once it has been bestirred by prevenient grace. "We can . . . ourselves do nothing to effect good works of piety without Him either working that we may will, or coworking when we will" (On Grace and Free Will, 33). Of great importance is "efficient" grace which is granted only to the saints who are predestined to God's kingdom, which enables them to will and to do what God expects of them. Augustine says: ". . . without that gift they cannot persevere . . . by means of this gift they cannot help persevering." (On Rebuke and Grace, 34.) Cf. Kelly, op. cit., p. 367.

[25]Letter 86. 7.

so simple a criterion of sanctity enabled the faithful to judge clearly between the holy and the unholy. This methodology of the Donatists led them to externalize as the objective work of man that which Augustine internalized as the subjective work of Christ, i.e. salvation and sanctification.[26] From Augustine's point of view, only Christ is

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[26]Augustine's Christocentric approach to the problem of man's salvation and sanctification reflects strong similarities with the thought of the Apostolic Father, Ignatius of Antioch. Ignatius, like Augustine, envisions man's redemption as the result of his union with Christ rather than as the reward for ethical or heroic conduct. Thus Ignatius says: ". . . Jesus Christ . . . suffered death that you might believe in his death and so escape dying yourselves" (Tral. II. 1). Cyril C. Richardson, trans. and ed., Early Christian Fathers, vol. i of The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953). Cf. To the Ephesians I. 1, To the Magnesians IX. 1, To the Philadelphians VIII. 2, To the Smyrnaeans I. 2, To the Romans VI. 1. In like manner, Ignatius also makes personal holiness contingent upon union with the Church--the "body of Christ"; cf. To the Ephesians II. 2, To the Smyrnaeans I. 2. In the West, Christocentric thought is reflected in Irenaeus, who asserts that Christ has redeemed us with his blood (Against Heresies V. 1. 1) and that the restoration of humanity to fellowship with God is effected only through the Savior (Ibid., III. 22. 4; V. 16. 3). Thus Ignatius, Irenaeus, and Augustine were within that same school of thought which placed Christ at the center of the work of salvation and sanctification. Ayer observes that "moralism was the opposite pole to the conceptions of the Asia Minor school, the Augustinian theology, and the whole mystical conception of Christianity." J. C. Ayer, A Source Book for Ancient Church History: From the Apostolic Age to the Close of the Conciliar Period (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1952), p. 134.

This is not to say that Augustine merely repeated the theocentric doctrines of Ignatius and Irenaeus. On the contrary, he carried theocentricity beyond any of their conceptions with his doctrine of irresistible grace or absolute predestination. To state his position briefly, by "irresistible grace" Augustine meant that no man can resist God's will when he wills to give salvation (cf.

qualified to judge his own work in man.

Thus far our discussion has been primarily concerned with the members who comprise the Church and the manner in which Augustine and the Donatists understood the holiness of those members. The question remains, in what sense is that corporate body known as the "Church" holy? We have seen that for the Donatists the holiness of the Church is inexorably bound up with the holiness of each of

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On Rebuke and Grace, 43). This doctrine of Augustine met with strong opposition because it was new and unheard of and ran against prevalent conceptions. (Cf. Harnack, op. cit., vol. v, p. 245.) Resistance to Augustine's doctrine of "irresistible grace" came even from those who rejected the Pelagian views of salvation. John Cassian, an ardent foe of Pelagianism, departed from Augustine by holding that the human will is rendered sick, not dead, by sin. Thus the function of grace is to restore and assist the human will which is already partially able to will the good. (Cf. J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines (2nd ed.; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), p. 371.

Absolute predestination failed to gain the sanction of the Church when the Council of Orange (529) modified the concept of irresistible grace and formulated a compromise that dominated soteriology in the Middle Ages. The crucial twenty-fifth article of the Council reads: "All the baptized, with the aid and cooperation of Christ, have the power and the duty to perform all things that pertain to the soul's salvation, if they will labor faithfully." Henry Bettenson, ed., Documents of the Christian Church (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1944), p. 87.

For further discussion on Ignatius' Christocentric theology see Cyril C. Richardson, The Christianity of Ignatius of Antioch (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935), pp. 25, 96 n. 53; Virginia Corwin, St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), pp. 212, 210. A helpful discussion on Irenaeus' theology of redemption is found in Kelly, op. cit., pp. 170-174.

her members. But for Augustine the matter is not so simply stated. The bishop depicts the Church on earth[27] as a "threshing floor" where the wheat and tares are comingled until the time of separation.[28] Yet he does not hesitate to refer to this corpus permixtum as "God's Holy Church."[29] Again we find overtones of that Biblical motif which ascribes holiness to God's possessions. It is precisely because the Church is God's that she is holy. The Catholic Church is the bride[30] and body[31] of Christ. She is indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God who gives life to those who abide in Catholic unity and the bond of charity (caritas).[32]

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[27]Augustine referred to the saints in heaven "already enjoying life angelical" as the "Church"; cf. Enarration 12 on Psalm 9. But the Church in her mundane aspect as the "Church toiling, sojourning upon earth" (Enarration 2 on Psalm 58) was his chief concern in the Donatist controversy, since it was her holiness that he was challenged to vindicate.

[28]On Baptism Against the Donatists, V. 21. 29.

[29]Prologue to Homilies on the Epistle of John; cf. Enarration 12 on Psalm 118, ". . . the body of Christ, the holy Church, the people of adoption. . . ."

[30]Homily 2 on I John, 2.

[31]Cf. Enarration 2 on Psalm 58; 12 on Psalm 95, 12 on Psalm 118; On the Gospel of John, 15:31.

[32]A detailed study of Augustine's concept of caritas is presented by Anders Nygren in Agape and Eros, Philip S. Watson, trans. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), see especially pp. 449-558. Nygren holds that Augustine's caritas is the product of a synthesis of the Neoplatonic eros and the New Testament, primarily Pauline, agape. In Neoplatonism, Nygren observes, eros is the desire of man to attain union with God and thus partake of the divine life. Eros is that which stimulates man to seek God while

The holiness of the Church is guaranteed, not by the spiritual perfection of her members, but by Christ who lives, works, and saves within her during her earthly sojourn.[33] Again we see that Augustine's approach is thoroughly Christocentric. The holiness of the Church is rooted firmly in Jesus Christ, her head,[34] and is therefore incapable of being diminished by the perfidy of her wayward members.

Christian agape motivates God to seek man.

Upon his conversion to Christianity, Augustine was impressed with the fact that agape enjoyed a central place in the New Testament similar to that of eros in Neoplatonic thought. Thus eros as the way to the divine life, becomes for the Christian Augustine, caritas, which is primarily love for God. To be sure neighborly love is legitimate, but only so far as it can be referred ultimately to God, for union of man with his Creator is, in the final analysis, the highest and only good; cf. The Confessions of Saint Augustine, book 7, trans. Edward B. Pusey (New York: Random House, 1949). See also John Burnaby, Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1960), p. 92, ". . . the caritas of Augustine is not only the desire for rest in union with God: it is also the rest attained, the union realized. . . ."

Paul's concept of agape as "brotherly love" (Gal. 5:10) and the principle of unity among the faithful (I Cor. 8:1) also plays a crucial part in Augustine's caritas. Indeed it is this fraternal aspect of love that Augustine stresses in his attack upon the Donatists for their disruption of Christian unity; cf. Letter 61.2, Tractate 8 on Gospel of John, 3. Paul's teaching that love is the work of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, Rom. 15:30, I Corin. 4:21) is also reflected in Augustine (e.g. Homily 3 on I Jn., 12). For a discussion of Paul's usage of agape, see the article on agapao by Ethelbert Stauffer in Kittel, op. cit., pp. 49-52.

[33] Grabowski, op. cit., pp. 456-457.

[34] Enarration 14 on Psalm 9, also 1 on Psalm 53.

But Augustine did not base the holiness of the Church solely upon her relationship to her invisible Head. Christ has left visible signs of his presence with the Church in the form of the holy sacraments.[35] Since the sacraments are divine in origin, their holy character is indelible and cannot be eradicated by the unworthiness of those who minister or receive them.[36] There is an objective and permanent holiness which belongs to the sacraments by virtue of their unique relationship. Thus Augustine set forth a sacramental holiness which could not be lost because it was grounded in God in opposition to the tenuous holiness of the Donatists which could be lost merely upon contact with traditores. In promulgating such an unvarying basis

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[35]Augustine does not offer a single definition of what constitutes a sacrament. He speaks of a sacrament as a "sacred sign" (City of God, X. 5); as a bond uniting the members of the Church (Letter 54. 1. 1); and as "something which is to be received as sacred" (Letter 55. 1. 2). He applies the term "sacrament" to things not included within the sacraments of modern Catholicism such as the Creed and the Lord's Prayer (Sermon 228. 3) and exorcism (Sermon 227). Cf. Portalié, op. cit., pp. 243 ff.

[36]Letter 87. 9, ". . . The sacraments . . . are holy, since they are the same in all." Cf. On Baptism Against the Donatists, IV. 20. 28.

Augustine held that even the worst reprobate possesses at least the holiness of the sacraments which he has received. Thus regarding the anointing of King Saul as a "sacrament" he says: "Here you see that Saul had not innocence, and yet he had holiness--not the personal holiness of a holy life . . . but the holiness of the sacrament of God, which is holy even in unrighteous men." Against the Letters of Petilian, II. 48. 112.

for holiness, Augustine followed Optatus[37] by claiming that the holy sacraments provide a sure foundation for the sanctity of the Church.

The sacrament that received particular attention during the controversy, of course, was that of baptism. Augustine especially endeavored to establish the point that the sanctity of baptism remains intact regardless of the spiritual condition of the baptizer or the baptized. It was at this point that he sided with the liberal Roman tradition as represented by Pope Stephen in opposition to Cyprian and the popular African tradition of rebaptizing heretics. Cyprian had erred, Augustine maintained, in failing to make a distinction between the gift of baptism and the profitable use of the sacrament.[38] Baptism is valid even when administered by a notorious heretic like Marcion, provided it is administered in the name of the

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[37]Optatus, II. 1, op. cit., see Chapter I. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, A History of Christian Thought (New York and London: Charles Scribner's, 1953), vol. ii, p. 110, "Following Optatus, Augustine maintained the sanctity of the Church lies not in the character of its members, but in its possession of the sacraments. . . ." Cf. Harnack, op. cit., vol. 5, p. 162, ". . . He desired to indicate the mark of the Church's holiness which, could not, with certainty, be established in any other way, in the objective holiness of the Sacraments."

[38]On Baptism Against the Donatists, VI. 1. 1, ". . . It appeareth to some even eminent men who were bishops of Christ . . . that the baptism of Christ could not exist among heretics or schismatics, this simply arose from their not distinguishing the sacrament from the effect or use of the sacrament." J. R. King, trans.

Triune God.[39] But even though the sacrament retains its objective sanctity, i.e. validity, outside the Church, it is a vehicle of redemptive grace only within the Catholic communion, since God has entrusted baptism to her alone.[40] It is admitted that the Donatists possess a valid baptism, but in it they hold what belongs to the Holy Spirit apart from the Holy Spirit.[41] While the holy sacraments have a salutary effect within the Church, they conversely have a detrimental effect upon those who hold them in "captivity," as it were, outside Catholic unity.[42] Sometimes the grace of salvation does not accompany baptism within the Church, but it never does outside it.[43] This, then, is the tragic

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[39] On Baptism Against the Donatists, III. 15. 20. Here the argument of Optatus is clearly evident; cf. Optatus, op. cit., V. 7.

[40] Ibid., III. 17. 22; C. H. Turner, "According then to St. Augustine's presentation the sacraments are not the sacraments of the schismatics or heretics, but the sacraments of God and the Church, wherever they are found and withersoever they are removed," p. 191 in The Early History of the Church and Ministry, by various writers, H. B. Swete, ed. (London: Macmillan, 1918).

[41] Tractate VI on Gospel of John, 15.

[42] Letter 61. 1; "We long to gain them for God . . . that they may have within the peace of the Church that holy sacrament, which they have . . . for their destruction." J. G. Cunningham, trans., in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers; cf. Tractate VI on Gospel of John, 14.

[43] On Baptism Against the Donatists, IV. 15. 23. Willis, op. cit., p. 156, "The grace is there latent and useless, valid but not efficacious to salvation or to the well-being of souls, until it be revivified by the sanctifying grace of charity within the fold of the Church."

plight of the Donatists according to Augustine. They hold the holy sacraments which are the rightful possession of the Catholic Church, but their obstinate refusal to return to Catholic unity makes their damnation inevitable.

From a purely technical aspect, Augustine and the Donatists shared a common view of the sacraments; that is, both agreed that they are effective unto salvation only within the "Church." But theologically speaking, their understanding of the sacraments was diametrically opposed. The Donatist position, as we have seen, was based upon the assumption that baptism is an act that is performed by men, thereby making the sanctity and efficacy of the sacrament dependent upon the integrity of the priests who administer it. However Augustine took the position that human virtue is too elusive and tenuous a matter to serve as a guarantee of either holy sacraments or a holy Church. By grounding the sanctity of the Church in the lives of the laity or the clergy, the Donatists were building upon a foundation of sand. Augustine believed that there is only one in whom personal holiness is perfect and beyond question--Jesus Christ.

Taking a Christocentric approach as his point of departure, Augustine never tired of reminding the Donatists that Jesus Christ, in the ultimate sense, is the only

minister of baptism,[44] thereby guaranteeing the holy nature of the sacrament under all circumstances. Christ has deigned to use the priests of the Church as his instruments to administer the sacrament, but he has delegated to none his authority to baptize with the Holy Spirit.[45] Therefore, it follows that when a man is baptized, he should give no thought to the spiritual condition of the priest administering the sacrament, lest he should cause his faith for salvation to rest in man instead of in Christ. Redemption is purely an act of God; in no sense is its efficacy helped or hindered by the virtue or vice of those who handle the sacraments. "Wherefore," Augustine concludes, "whether a man receive the sacrament of baptism from a faithful or a faithless minister, his whole hope is in Christ. . . ."[46]

In this manner Augustine totally divorced the efficacy of the sacraments from the personal character of the priests and rooted it firmly in Christ. Thus he could say that even a minister guilty of murder could not destroy

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[44]Cf. Enarration 20 on Psalm 132, Tractate 13 on Gospel of John, 11; Against the Letters of Petilian, I. 4. 5; Letter 34. 3.

Turner, op. cit., p. 144, ". . . Said St. Augustine: the Sacraments derive their reality not from the minister, who is nothing except an agent, but from Christ as the only source of grace and power. . . ." Cf. Portalie, op. cit., pp. 244-245.

[45]Tractate 6 on Gospel of John, 6.

[46]Against the Letters of Petilian, I. 6. 7, Trans. J. G. Cunningham.

the sacred nature and power of baptism.[47]

> For the spiritual virtue of the sacrament is like the light: both by those who are to be enlightened is it received pure, and if it passes through the impure it is not stained.[48]

What Christ does in perfection cannot be vitiated or improved upon by man. This, to Augustine, was the supreme argument against the custom of rebaptizing those who had been baptized by an unworthy priest or heretic. In effect, by rebaptizing those who joined their sect, the Donatists were obscuring Christ, the true minister of baptism, and exalting man as the source of grace and the guarantor of salvation. "Therefore," he affirms, "to rebaptize even a heretic who has received in baptism the seal of holiness . . . is unquestionably a sin. . . ."[49] And of apostates reconciled to the Church he can say, ". . . Apostates do not lack baptism, and to them it is never given again when they return by means of penitence, and therefore, it is judged not possible to lose it."[50]

Briefly to summarize Augustine's argument on this point, if man is the source of holiness, then sanctity is

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[47]Tractate 5 on Gospel of John, 19.

[48]Tractate 5 on Gospel of John, 15, John Gibb, trans.

[49]Letter 23. 2, J. G. Cunningham, trans.

[50]Contra epistulam Parmeniani, II, 13, cited by Joseph Cullen Ayer, A Source Book for Ancient Church History From the Apostolic Age to the Close of the Conciliar Period (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 453.

truly transient in nature, for the virtuous man of today may be the profane man of tomorrow. But if holiness finds its true source in God, it is indelible in character, for it proceeds from one whose perfection is immutable. Upon this premise Augustine rested his case.

Having firmly based the holiness of the Church upon a larger foundation than did his Donatist opponents, Augustine's concept of the scope of the Church was consequently much more encompassing than was that of the rigorists. He saw the Church on earth as the visible society of all the baptized who are obedient to ecclesiastical authority; therefore, while there might be a mystery concerning the identity of the elect, there was no mystery concerning those who belonged to the true Church.[51] He envisioned the Church as one, but having two aspects to her existence. Using the analogy of man who is one reality composed of two entities--a visible body and an invisible spirit, Augustine claims that the one true Church is also composed of a visible body which is vivified by the invisible "Spirit of Christ."[52] The visible aspect of the Church, of the "body of Christ" is manifested in the world as a

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[51]Tractate 6 on Gospel of John, 25, ". . . those who, being outside the communion of the Catholic Church, usurp to themselves the name of Christians . . . ," John Gibb and James Innes, trans. Cf. Portalié, op. cit., pp. 234-235.

[52]Tractate 26 on Gospel of John, 13.

"compact of members"[53] who, by their adherence to the body of Christ are a "sign of unity."[54] It is within this one, visible Church that the bishop exhorts all to be "embodied," so that they might be filled with the life of the Spirit.[55]

Augustine wished to make it unmistakably clear that, in contrast to the schismatic and heretical sects, the Catholic Church alone possesses the Holy Spirit of God and the fruit of the Spirit--caritas.[56] Thus he refers to the Church as the "bond of charity"[57] and "holy indivisible charity."[58] Again Augustine brings his theocentric emphasis to bear forcefully upon the argument. The Spirit of God, love (caritas), and holiness are not separate entities in his thought; they are correlative. The source of divine

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Caritas, or Christian love, was so central to Augustine's thought that he envisioned it as the ultimate root of all that is truly good in man. Thus Augustine says that ". . . the deeds of men are only discerned by the root of charity. For many things may be done that have a good appearance, and yet proceed not from the root of charity. . . . Love, and do what thou wilt. . . ." Tractate 7 on I John, 8. Also he says: "If ye have a mind to confess and not love, ye begin to be like the demons." Tractate 2 on I John, 8, H. Browne, trans.

In the City of God, XIV. 28, Augustine develops the idea that love for God and love for self are the sources of the City of God and the City of Man, respectively.

[57] Tractate 26 on Gospel of John, 13.

[58] Letter 173. 4.

love is the Holy Spirit who is Himself love.[59] It is the Spirit who "anoints" the hearts of the faithful, thereby infusing them with caritas.[60] In the final analysis, holiness and love for God are a gift from God which is inseparable from the Spirit of God.[61]

While Augustine made it clear that the Spirit is redemptively operative only within the Catholic Church, he also acknowledged that not everyone within her walls participates in the life of the Spirit. There are those who do not belong to the Holy Spirit because of their lust for personal gain and lack of love for Jesus Christ.[62] While

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[59]Tractate 9 on Gospel of John, 8.

[60]Homily 3 on I John, 12, ". . . the invisible unction is the Holy Ghost; the invisible unction is that charity, which, in whomsoever it be, shall be as a root to him. . . ." H. Browne, trans., loc. cit.; cf. Homily 3 on I John, 5.

G. Nygren, "The Augustinian Conception of Grace" in Studia Patristica, vol. 2, part 2, Kurt Aland and F. L. Cross, eds. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1957), p. 268, "As God infuses his caritas into the hearts through the Holy Spirit, man's affections are really changed fervently to embrace eternal wisdom, whereby a righteous life comes into being. . . ." Cf. Seeberg, op. cit., p. 471, "Augustine conceives of the invisible unction of the Spirit which . . . brings about a holy kingdom of the Spirit, which . . . contains all within it who do what is good and holy. . . ."

[61]Cf. Homily 3 on I John, 12. Here we detect a similarity with the thought of Tertullian. Cf. Tertullian, On Modesty, XXI; On Baptism, VI; Exhortation to Chastity, X. Seeberg, op. cit., p. 470, "Thus he is going back, to a certain degree, to . . . Tertullian, for he also held the belief that the Church of the Spirit consists of holy members."

[62]Tractate 6 on Gospel of John, 1, "What are the ravens? They who seek their own. Who are the doves? They

those who are infused with caritas and those who are not both belong to the Church visible, the latter do not wholly belong to the Church, because they do not abide in the Spirit who gives her life.[63] Thus Augustine's awareness of the fact that the Church is composed of both the holy and the unholy led him to make a distinction between the Church visible and the Church invisible--between those who merely profess and those who actually participate in the fulness of the life of the Church.[64] However, such a distinction did not lead Augustine to suggest that the unholy

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who seek the things that are Christ's." John Gibb, trans., loc. cit.; cf. On Baptism Against the Donatists, III. 18. 25; 19. 26; IV. 10. 6.

For Augustine, caritas is the "wedding garment" which is worn only by the saints, thus entitling them to a place in God's Kingdom. Cf. Tractate 6 on Gospel of John, 23; Sermon 90. 6. Cf. Grabowski, op. cit., p. 357, "In the final analysis the virtue of charity determines whether one is holy, lives in union with God, and is one with Christ or not. With charity one is just; without it unjust even if gifted with faith and hope."

[63] On Baptism Against the Donatists, IV. 3. 5, "For neither are they devoted to the Church who seem to be within and live contrary to Christ. . . . But if they are not in that Church to whose members they do not belong, they are not in the Church of which it is said, 'My dove is one; she is the only one of her mother'; for she herself is without spot or wrinkle." Cf. ibid., VII. 51. 99; Sermon 40. 5; Tractate 6 on Gospel of John, 12.

[64] Arthur Cushman McGiffert, A History of Christian Thought, 2 vols. (New York and London: Charles Scribner's, 1953), p. 110, "The church is made up of bad and good. . . . The recognition of this fact led Augustine to distinguish between the visible and the invisible church, between the external institution and the inner kernel of genuine Christians." Cf. Seeberg, op. cit., p. 470.

are excluded from membership in the Church during her earthly sojourn,[65] nor did it lead him to hold that there are two separate Churches--a visible Church of the sacraments and an invisible "true" Church composed only of the holy.[66] Such concepts are alien to Augustine's convictions

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[65]Concerning the Church, Augustine says, "To all it gives power to participate in the grace of God, whether they are as yet to be formed or reformed, admitted for the first time or gathered in anew. Its own carnal members, i.e., those whose lives or opinions are carnal, it tolerates as chaff by which the corn is protected on the floor until it is separated from its covering. On this floor everyone voluntarily makes himself either corn or chaff." Of True Religion, vi, 10, J. H. S. Burleigh, trans. Introduction by Louis O. Mink (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1959). Portalié points out that in contrast to the Donatists, Augustine held that "sinners are truly in the Church." Op. cit., p. 234.

[66]Harnack, I believe, fails to do justice to Augustine when he says: ". . . his conception of the Church was penetrated by an element which resisted the idea that it was visible." Op. cit., vol. 5, p. 164. Altendorf seems to follow Harnack's mode of thought when he says: "Kirche im eigentlichen Sinne ist wirklich nur die Gemeinde der boni und sancti, wie die Donastisten es verlangen." Op. cit., p. 171. Seeberg also echoes this opinion when he says, "Thus in the true sense the Church is only the good and holy; the godless and heretics only seem to belong to it, because it is the temporalis commixitio et communio sacramentorum." Op. cit., p. 470.

Grabowski is correct, I believe, when he rejects such one-sided emphases on an invisible Church as being a true interpretation of Augustine's thought. Of Augustine, Grabowski says: "His whole position discountenances any interpretation of a twofold Church. In such a case the Church, the body of Christ, and the Church of the Sacraments could no longer be identical and coincident. The Church which he so passionately defends against schism would no longer be one. The Church which he constantly holds out for heretics and schismatics to discern from counterfeit churches and to recognize as the true Church of Christ would no longer be visible." Op. cit., p. 519.

concerning both the mission and the unity of the Church.

The outstanding characteristic of the Church, for Augustine, is her unity in caritas,[67] and none have shown greater contempt for this divine love than have the schismatics by their divisive spirit.[68] Donatists may perish as "martyrs,"[69] they may say pax vobiscum,[70] but all to no avail, since they lack the Holy Spirit who abides in Catholic unity. Following this reasoning to its logical end, Augustine could only conclude that "the Church of saints is the Catholic Church. The Church of the saints is not the Church of the heretics."[71]

In summation, Augustine based the holiness of the Catholic Church upon three arguments. First and foremost, the Church is holy because she is the bride and body of Christ--God's own possession. Secondly, she is holy because

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[67] On Baptism Against the Donatists, III. 16. 21, "The charity which covereth the multitude of sins is the special gift of Catholic unity," J. R. King, trans., loc. cit. Cf. Seeberg, op. cit., p. 447, "Only in the Catholic Church can the Spirit of love be acquired, and . . . otherwise love cannot be maintained than within unity."

[68] Cf. Sermon 88. 21; Tractate 9 on Gospel of John, 12.

[69] Tractate 6 on Gospel of John, 23.

[70] Enarration 10 on Psalm 125.

[71] Enarration 2 on Psalm 149.

she possesses holy sacraments which have been entrusted to her by her divine Lord. Thirdly, the Church is holy because it is only within her fellowship that men are able to attain sanctity through the ministry of the Holy Spirit who infuses the faithful with divine love.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

Augustine and the Donatists had much in common in so far as Cyprian formed the watershed for their doctrine of the Church as the exclusive sphere of salvation. But outside of this common ground, they were radically opposed in their understanding of the Church as a holy society. It is our conclusion that the basic difference between Augustine and the Donatists in defining the holiness of the Church was that of a Christocentric approach as opposed to that of a moralistic or anthropocentric approach.

Although Tertullian and Cyprian were noted representatives of that tradition which made personal sanctity contingent upon human behavior, it remained for the Donatists, at least in Africa, to develop an extensive doctrine of the Church upon this form of moralism. The entire Donatist position rested upon an assumption that was generally characteristic of all moralistic movements; that is, man is able to attain moral perfection and, thus, holiness through self-exertion. Naturally such an assumption demands a view of human nature, or, to be more precise, a view of

human volition, that is essentially optimistic.[1] Standing within this stream of thought, the Donatists had no doubts about the ability of a Christian to conduct his life in a righteous manner, for a true saint, first and foremost, was one who absented himself from traditores and all who were corrupted by their sacramental administrations. Since the test of holiness among the Donatists was so simple and obvious, little if any leniency was shown the moral offender, since virtually no allowance was made for human frailty. Thus the "saints" were within the Church as a reward for meritorious courage in a time of persecution, while the "evil" were outside as a just compensation for their cowardliness.[2]

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[1]The antiquity of such optimism in Christian thought is reflected in the Apologist, Theophilus of Antioch who said, "God made man free and with power over himself." To Autolycus, II. 27, Marcus Dods, trans., The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. ii, Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, and Clement of Alexandria (entire American edition), Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ed. (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1890), Chronologically arranged with Notes, Prefaces, and Elucidations by A. Cleveland Coxe.

[2]A similar expression of moralism is found in Justin Martyr, who was certainly never regarded by the Catholic Church to be a schismatic or heretic. Justin says, "We have learned from the prophets, and we hold it to be true, that punishments, and chastisements, and good rewards, are rendered according to the merits of each man's actions. . . . For if it be fated that this man, e.g. be good, and this other evil, neither is the former meritorious nor the latter to be blamed. And again, unless the human race have the power of avoiding evil and choosing good by free choice, they are not accountable for their actions, of whatever kind they may be." First Apology, 43, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, trans. and ed., The Ante-Nicene

Moralism, as we have observed,[3] was common both to the Donatist and Pelagian ethos. To be sure, moralism never enjoyed the uninhibited expression among the Donatists that it did among the Pelagians. Consequently, the Catholic Church could refer to the former as "schismatics" and the latter as "heretics."[4] Pelagian moralism struck at the very heart of the Christian doctrine of salvation, Augustine argued, because its teaching on human moral autonomy virtually denied man's need for the redemptive work of Christ.[5] But according to Augustine, the Donatists

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Fathers, vol. i (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1890).

Cf. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, A History of Christian Thought, 2 vols. (New York and London: Charles Scribner's, 1953), vol. i, p. 101, "In Justin's opinion there is no virtue except independent virtue. If a man's character is due to God it is not his own and deserves neither reward nor punishment."

Augustine's pessimistic view of human nature was out of harmony with such "moralistic" and "anthropocentric" concepts which found varying degrees of expression among his contemporaries and predecessors. Through Adam's sin, Augustine argued, man has lost his ability to "will" to persevere in goodness (On Rebuke and Grace, 37). Only by the grace of God can man know what is good and accomplish it (On Forgiveness of Sins and Baptism, II. 7).

[3]See p. 27, note 22.

[4]For the distinction between the terms see p. 22, note 6.

[5]The Pelagian doctrine which Augustine considered especially adverse to the Christian faith was the assertion that it is possible for man to live without sinning, if he consistently chooses to do so by the power of his natural volition. Cf. On the Proceedings of Pelagius, 5; On Nature and Grace, 8; Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, I. 39.

acknowledged man's spiritual impotency apart from divine intervention.[6] The Donatist expression of moralism which especially aggravated Augustine was their assertion that the holiness of the Church is contingent upon the conduct of her members. In his own view of personal holiness, Augustine at times expressed ideas which could rightly be called "moralistic" and "anthropocentric."[7] But when it came to the question of the holiness of the Catholic Church, there could be no question in his mind; her holiness is derived from God and cannot be jeopardized by the perfidy of her members.

Within this "theocentric" thesis of Augustine we find three predominant motifs which have their roots in biblical and early patristic writings. First, there is that motif, so characteristic of Irenaeus[8] and

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[6] Against the Letters of Petilian, II. 22. 49; 31. 70; 35. 8.

[7] Augustine sounds like Tertullian when he says: ". . . whereas the whole Church is holy both in body and spirit, and yet the whole is not virgin in body but in spirit; how much more holy is it in those members, wherein it is virgin both in body and spirit?" Of Holy Virginity, 2, trans. C. I. Cornish, The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. iii (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956). Cf. Tertullian, On Exhortation to Chastity, x; On the Veiling of Virgins, xv.

Augustine distinguishes between sacramental holiness and the holiness of a "holy life." The former exists in all men--good and evil--who have received the holy sacrament of baptism. The latter exists only in those who are "innocent." Cf. Against the Letters of Petilian, II. 48. 112.

[8] E.g., Against Heresies, III. 24. 1.

Cyprian,[9] which envisions the Holy Spirit as a divine gift to the Church. If the Spirit is the exclusive property of the Catholic Church,[10] then there can be no thought of redemption, much less holiness, existing among schismatics or heretics. The logic of this motif, as we have seen, was simple though harsh, and Augustine followed other champions of Catholic unity in using it as a bludgeon against dissenters.

Secondly, there is that motif, frequently expressed in scripture, which attributes holiness to things or persons set apart for the service of God. Optatus, as we have seen, adapted this biblical theme to suit his polemical needs by emphasizing the intrinsic holiness of the sacraments as the possessions of Christ and his Church. This line of reasoning became a powerful weapon in the hands of Augustine who never tired of arguing that the sanctity of the sacraments is derived from the immutable nature of God, not the mutable nature of man. More than any other before him, the African doctor established a firm case for the objective holiness of the sacraments.[11]

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[9]E.g., Epistle 73. 4.

[10]As Augustine maintains also; cf. Correction of the Donatists, XI. 50; Sermon 21. 30.

[11]Adolph Harnack, History of Dogma, 7 vols. Neil Buchanan, trans. (New York: Dover Publications, 1961), vol. v, p. 41, "The Donatist crisis . . . taught the Church to form a stringent view of the objectivity of the sacraments."

Important as the preceding motifs were in Augustine's debate with the schismatics, it is our belief that none was more essential to his thought or inimical to the Donatist position than that biblical motif which ascribes holiness to God alone. Nothing could be more antithetical to the Donatist concern for the sanctity of man to guarantee the holiness of the Church than Augustine's emphasis upon the holiness of God and the wretchedness of man. By his Christocentric approach to the central issue of the schism, Augustine divorced the sanctity of the Church from the merits of the faithful and grounded it totally in Jesus Christ, who, he believed, graciously infuses the Church with the Spirit of love and holiness. According to his schema, the holiness of the Church is unconditional, for it is grounded in one in whom holiness has found its perfect expression--the Son of God. Therefore, even though the spiritual condition of her members may be most abject, the holiness of the Church remains inviolate. Naturally, such a concept goes against the grain of anthropocentric interpretations of "holy Church" by making holiness ultimately dependent upon divine initiative rather than human endeavor.

The uniqueness of Augustine's argument, to a great extent, lies in his ability to extract significant elements from the most divergent streams of thought and to synthesize

these elements into a thesis that is convincing. Two divergent streams of thought flow together and blend into one in the mind of Augustine. On the one hand, we find that tradition which emphasized the holy nature of the Church in terms of Spirit-filled saints. As we have seen, this stream of thought received its classic expression in the person of Tertullian. On the other hand, we find that tradition which emphasized the sacraments as the locus of the Church's holiness. Optatus of Milevis, who laid much of the groundwork for Augustine's struggle with the Donatists,[12] was the primary wellspring of this view. On the surface, these two streams of thought seem to be mutually exclusive, yet the very nature of the Donatist controversy virtually compelled Augustine to effect a synthesis between the two. To deny the presence of those who were actually holy or "spiritual" within the Church would have been a major concession to the rigorists. It would have been, in effect, an admission that the Donatists were correct in their assertion that the Church had perished within the Catholic communion. But purely from a pastoral

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[12]James Franklin Bethune-Baker, An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine to the Time of the Council of Chalcedon (2nd ed.; London: Methuen, 1962), p. 369, n. 1; "As regards the unity of the Church, Optatus . . . had already maintained the principle that Church and Sacraments and priesthood were independent of individual personal worthiness. And Augustine does little more than reiterate what Optatus had urged."

viewpoint, Augustine did not find it either necessary or valid to make such a concession. While he frequently mentions the presence of sinners and imperfection within the Catholic Church, he does so to contrast what he believes to be a realistic appraisal of the Church and human nature with the claims of the Donatists to absolute purity and holiness.

Augustine's own contribution to the controversy--the doctrine of absolute predestination--also undergirded his concept of the Church as a corpus permixtum. Since, according to Augustine, the Church in her present state must exist as a mixed company of the elect and the damned, all attempts to reduce the Church to a company of "holy" men are both futile and arrogant. Not until after the Day of Judgment will the Church consist solely of saints. In the interim prior to the Judgment, the holy sacraments provide the roof, as it were, which cover both elect and reprobates within the walls of one visible Church. But whether Augustine refers to the Church's holiness subjectively, in terms of the indwelling Spirit, or objectively, in terms of the visible sacraments, he is not referring to two separate sources of holiness. Jesus Christ is, for him, the wellspring of the Church's sanctity, both subjectively and objectively. The same Christ who has instituted the holy sacraments also baptizes the faithful with the

Holy Spirit. Christ, then, is the keystone who joins the two aspects of the Church's holiness together, uniting them in one holy Catholic Church.

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